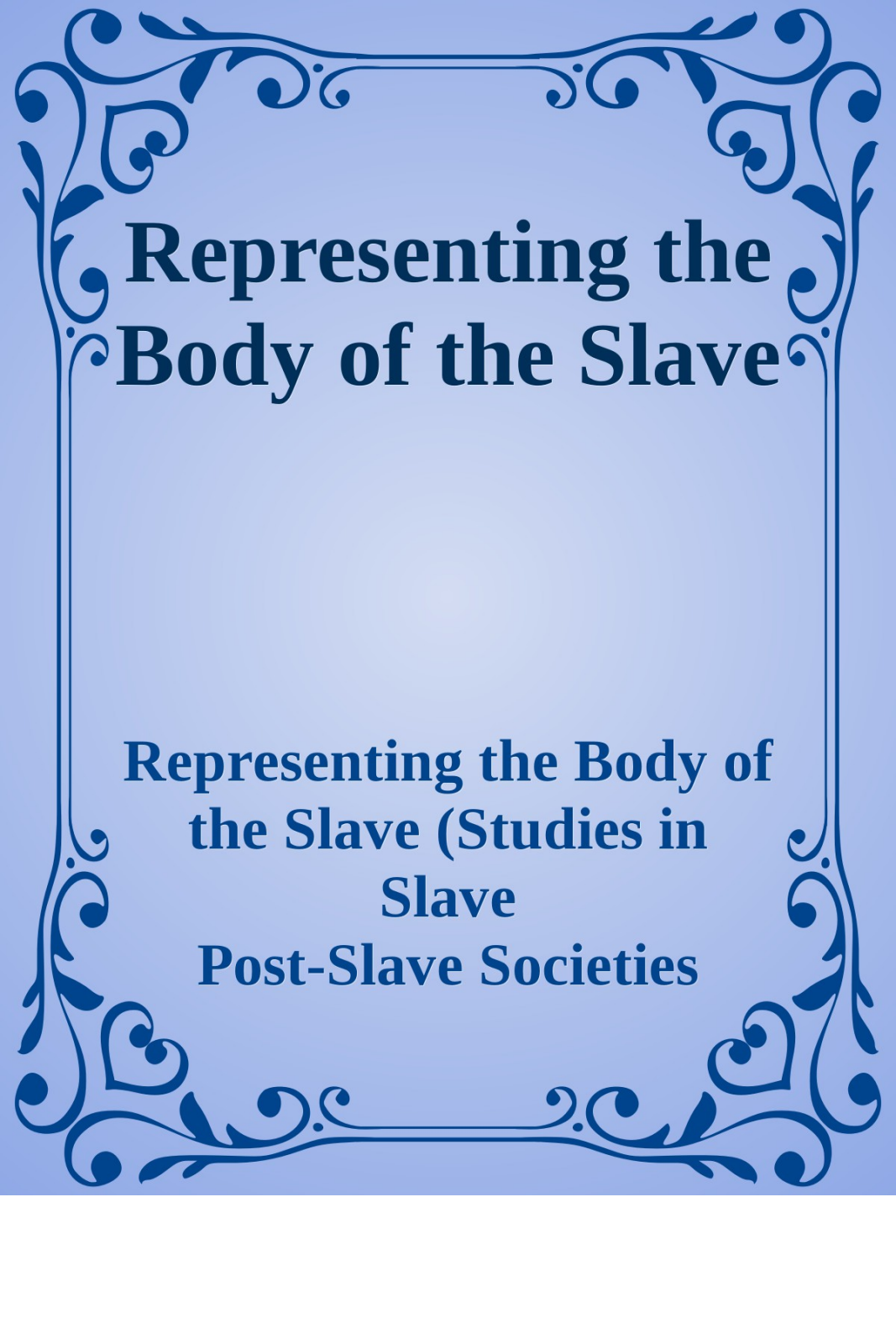




Representing the Body of the Slave

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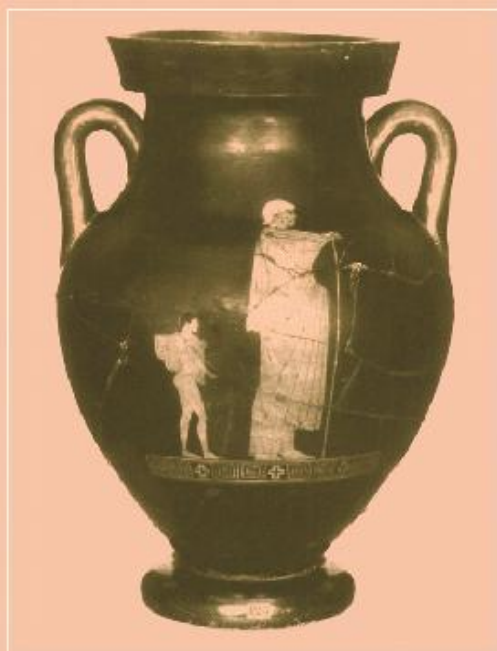
REPRESENTING THE BODY OF THE SLAVE



Editors

THOMAS WIEDEMANN
and **JANE GARDNER**

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STUDIES IN SLAVE AND POST-SLAVE SOCIETIES AND CULTURES

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Representing the Body of the Slave

Editors

THOMAS WIEDEMANN

University of Nottingham

JANE GARDNER

Universities of Reading and Nottingham

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Preface

ICHOS (the International Centre for the History of Slavery) was set up at the University of Nottingham, England, in 1998. The project was initiated by staff in the Department of Classics, which contains a number of social historians, including Professor Thomas Wiedemann and Special Professor Jane Gardner (Emeritus Professor of Ancient History at Reading University). Support was also forthcoming from colleagues in the School of American and Canadian Studies, and from a number of departments, especially History, Theology and Hispanic and Latin American Studies.

ICHOS sees its primary function as serving the academic study of the history of slavery by encouraging the international and interdisciplinary exchange of ideas; particularly important has been the development of existing links with scholars in other countries, and with comparable bodies such as the Gilder Lehrman Center at Yale and the Mainz Akademie project for the study of Greek and Roman slavery.

The essays in this volume are by participants in the first of a planned series of international and interdisciplinary conferences, held by ICHOS at the University of Nottingham, 11–13 September 2000. The theme was ‘Representing the Body of the Slave’.

Introduction

THOMAS WIEDEMANN and JANE GARDNER

Contributors to this collection of essays examine how the bodies of slaves have been written or spoken about or depicted in art in different times, cultures and parts of the world – ancient Greece and Rome, early medieval Britain, the Ottoman Empire, North America, the Caribbean and Brazil.

Much of this source material is highly revelatory of the attitudes of those who initially created it, and who intended to influence others. Not surprisingly, members of the slave-owning society were generally concerned to distinguish sharply between free and slave, and implicitly to justify the institution of slavery, by asserting the natural inferiority of slaves. Abolitionists, on the other hand, stressed the slaves' essential humanity, and even nobility, and deplored the brutality and cruelty with which they were treated. So too, did the comments of ex-slaves themselves. Narratives of this type by former slaves in North America are already well known; it is exciting to learn of the autobiographic material from former slaves in Brazil that, as reported by Krueger, current research is unearthing.

Comparative approaches to the subject of slavery have a long history, and too often the results have served merely as a warning: many comparative studies have been vitiated by unjustified generalizations from the writer's own field of knowledge and ignorance of appropriate parallels. The habit of applying one particular single word for 'slave', in the scholar's own language, to widely different social groups in the societies studied has also resulted in a quagmire of definition. The problem of defining slavery is not a new one (it goes back at least as far as Greek antiquity), and recent discussions of the 'essence' of slavery have tended to impress sociologists rather more than historians. There are other problems with the comparative approach. In practice, it can never be genuinely universal. For example, Western scholars have shown relatively little interest in Islamic slavery; modern historians are often unfamiliar with the details of ancient Greek and Roman society; and ancient historians are often all too ready to assume that agricultural slavery, as manifested in the New World, can be used to fill gaps in our knowledge of slave experience in the ancient world.

New World slavery, especially that of the southern United States, has inevitably been the conscious or subconscious point of comparison for modern Western scholars. Nineteenth-century American slavery, with its vast cotton plantations, has been regarded as universally characteristic of slavery. Ancient

historians have taken this as the model for economically exploitative ancient *latifundia* (large-scale farms worked by slave gangs belonging to absentee Roman owners), which in fact, it is now realized, were typical neither of farming in the ancient world, nor of its uses of slaves in general.

This misapprehension has been fundamental not only to Marx, himself initially a Platonic scholar, and his successors, but also to those liberal scholars who have seen all slavery primarily in terms of economic exploitation. It is a comparison which ignores the fact that agricultural production on the scale of the American South was made practicable only by technological advances in the processing of cotton in the industrial age. It also failed to take account of the substantial numbers of slaves there who were not agricultural but domestic servants or urban craftsmen (many of them, incidentally, owned by black former slaves); this was equally or even more true of the ancient world.

The American experience of slavery makes unavoidable the question of the relationship between slavery and race, and Aristotle's responsibility for linking the two. Again, simple comparisons may mislead: some ancient world scholars have produced studies of blacks, and colour prejudice, that minimize their importance for Greco-Roman antiquity (where 'blacks' were in fact little known). This approach confuses colour with race. Much more important for ancient society, particularly among the Greeks, was the distinction between belonging, i.e. being a Greek, and being an outsider, a *barbaros*. The latter, it was held, were fitted to be slaves to Greeks, since factors such as their home climate and social structures contributed to making them both physically and morally inferior to their Greek owners. Weiler shows in detail the prevalence of this attitude in ancient literature and art, which was produced for, and intended to appeal to the values of, the wealthier slave-owners. And, as Toledano points out, the European representation of Ottoman slaves 'tells us more about Western societies and their attitude to slavery and the Orient, than it reflects Ottoman realities'. Ottoman perceptions of slaves, on the other hand, were equally conditioned by their own culture, and the uses to which their slaves were put were largely dependent upon their racial origins.

Comparisons are undoubtedly dangerous; but they cannot be avoided. In any case, ancient historians at least are obliged to be comparative, since they study both Greece and Rome, where there were marked differences, noted already by commentators in antiquity, between important structural features of Roman and Greek slavery. The most striking difference is the practice of granting citizenship to formally manumitted slaves in the Roman world, but not the Greek. Closer to the Greek attitude, although different in origin, is the hostility and obstruction shown in parts of the United States until late in the twentieth century towards the attempts, even by the free descendants of black slaves, to exercise their political, and indeed social, rights.

This difference in the status given ex-slaves in the ancient world corresponds to some extent to modern sociological models of 'open' and 'closed' systems of slavery, i.e. slavery as a mode of integration or of exclusion;

the theme chosen for the second ICHOS conference, held in September 2001, was the integration and exclusion of ex-slaves.

If the granting of political rights to former slaves was in the ancient world something specific only to the structure of slavery in Roman society, then this presents to those working on New World slavery the consideration that the exclusion of freed slaves from political life is equally culture-specific. It is not a 'natural' consequence of slavery. This in turn helps to explain why the abolitionists of the nineteenth century could rely on so many primary accounts generated by former slaves, like those discussed by Altink, Bernier and Krueger, to support the campaign against slavery. Such material is almost totally lacking for more open slave societies. In the Anglophone world freed slaves continued to identify themselves with slaves, instead of themselves, as in ancient Rome, investing in owning slaves and seeking integration with the propertied classes; many examples are known of wealthy Roman freedmen and of social mobility among their freeborn descendants.

There are several ways in which a comparative conference may generate new insights. Specific comparisons can function in a way similar to the sociologist's 'model', by drawing attention to the presence or absence of certain features in particular slave systems. Further, they can act to provide insights into aspects of the picture for which there is no evidence in our own areas of scholarship. We might think of three possible kinds of attitude towards the use of the comparative method. One approach is to create broad pictures of common or even universal cross-cultural features of slavery; the results of this, as pointed out above, have often been highly unsatisfactory. Another is merely to confirm fundamental differences between the way slavery functioned in different cultures, leaving each discipline to continue its research largely in isolation. More constructive than either is the view that comparisons enable us to identify similar elements, sometimes apparently very inconsequential, and then invite us to go on to establish what the reasons for these common elements are. Such reasons may be of a number of different types. They may, for instance, be due to common developments from the same root (for instance, all cultures of European origin have inherited the idea expressed in Roman law that slaves are property); they may nevertheless produce a range of different consequences. Alternatively, they may result from coincidentally similar responses to similar situations or problems.

One value of this 'third way' of approaching the subject is that exchange of information across disciplinary and international boundaries serves to raise questions – even though there might sometimes be no answer to them.

Weiler, a member of the Mainz Akademie project on the history of ancient slavery, lucidly describes attitudes to slaves and slavery in the culture of the classical world. His title, 'Negative *Kalokagathia*', immediately draws attention to the fact that in classical art and literature representations of slaves are not objective descriptions, but an inversion of the characteristics which those who generate the evidence see as socially ideal. This is a feature of the

descriptions of slaves which clearly applies in many other slave-owning cultures. He also notes some peculiarities specific to the ancient Greek world, namely the identification of the free citizen with not just an adult male Greek speaker, but also a warrior and in particular an athlete. Consequently the physical representation of slaves as ugly or even deformed needs to be seen in the context of their exclusion from the activities of elite citizens, not just fighting but also athletics.

The slave's exclusion from the gymnasium was a typical but also unique feature of Greek culture. Yet that rejection of the slave as 'ugly' is not straightforward. Though images of deformed people and ugly people are usually intended to represent slaves, there is evidence that there was a high demand for deformed slaves in the slave market as monstrosities. These were intended for display in the households of the wealthy, or as jesters providing the kind of entertainment that would have been degrading to free persons. In effect, slave status was believed to be accompanied by physical, and by implication also moral, inferiority.

This ideal notion conflicted with reality, in more than one way; it was an observable fact that 'inferior' looks and physique were not found solely among slaves, any more than their opposites belonged solely to free men. Physiologically, also, no difference between slave and free was apparently perceived by Greek doctors. As McKeown points out, the collection of medical cases in the Hippocratic corpus known as the *Epidemiai* indicates that Hippocratic physicians associated no separate category of physical illnesses specifically with slaves.

Dress was also ambiguous as an indication of slave or free status, both in the ancient world and later. Both in the Roman world and in early medieval Britain, there appears to have been no official 'slave uniform'. The everyday wear of free people below elite status was very similar to that of slaves, so that slaves – not being immediately recognisable by skin colour – could not always be identified for what they were.

George's essay shows how this ambiguity of dress was on occasion, according to literary sources, exploited as a disguise by elite Romans. The purpose was merely to conceal the elite appearance; there is no reference to any attempt to imitate supposedly servile behaviour. However, conflict with the belief in the perceptible natural inferiority of the slave was avoided; all the stories are set in times of disturbance and upheaval, when the disguise has to be maintained only for a short time, avoiding the possibility (or likelihood?) of true inherent superiority betraying itself.

In medieval England, also, the two are kept separate. In various riddles and stories cited by Pelteret, slaves are disparaged as physically ugly and uncouth and morally inferior, whereas visual representations are ambiguous and therefore much harder to interpret.

In the Ottoman Empire, the situation was a good deal more complex, as Toledano explains, and his account raises several important issues for the

study of slavery in general. Within the Islamic world, and even within the Ottoman Empire, there was a variety of cultural traditions, and in addition in the nineteenth century there are indications of European influence upon Ottoman art in the depiction of female harem slaves. While skin colour and racial origins are clearly influential upon the uses made of slaves, and the social status thereafter of any manumitted, it is not clear whether these distinctions can strictly be called racist. Slaves of Caucasian origin are preferred as harem slaves or (the males) for important governmental posts, while those of African origin are assigned to agriculture and other lower-grade jobs, with different terms for the two groups of slaves. However, we do not find any connection made between physical appearance and moral character. Indeed, the standard of beauty for slaves does not appear to differ from that for non-slaves.

As we move into the modern world, attention shifts to slavery in the Americas, and to different issues. Among slaves and ex-slaves, some wish to assert positively their ethnic identity in direct or indirect ways, both verbally and in details of dress traditional in their own cultures. The essential common humanity and equality in moral stature of slave and free, black and white, is asserted in various ways both by white pro-abolitionists, some of whom tend to stress the slaves' acceptance of 'civilized' (i.e. European) values, and, as noted above, in the words of ex-slaves themselves.

Bernier's essay embraces both, examining closely how Frederick Douglass represented the same episode of a slave ship insurrection in November 1841 in different ways, in a description aimed at a black readership and a similar description primarily aimed at a white one. These accounts are drawn upon and indeed echoed later by both black and white opponents of slavery. This analysis makes clear the problems in using any literary text as evidence for historical reality. For a black audience, stress is laid mainly upon feeling justified pride in black physical and racial identity, and their capacity for community action and for leadership. For a white audience, there is appeal to stereotypical notions of physical and heroic ideals, and moral potential. In the twentieth century a black author writing for a more sophisticated elite black audience combines the two approaches, blurring the racial distinction and reasserting the right of blacks to participate in the life of the community as a whole.

Altink looks at some of the archival material associated with the British abolitionist movement, and analyses the way in which the bodies of slave women were used in abolitionist discourse in the period 1770–1838. Abolitionists made much of the flogging of female slaves in Jamaica, partly as an outrage to attract the attention of their (white, male) potential readers, but also to show that slavery was inimical to the development of middle-class evangelical family values, of the kind which that readership took as its social ideal. The flogging of women effectively crossed a symbolic boundary, destroying proper gender roles for black women and also for their menfolk, as

husbands and fathers. The abolitionists were emphasizing the moral capacity of black slaves, and their common humanity with white people.

Lara, Slenes and Krueger present three different ways in which Brazilian slavery was represented in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, by white artists and in the writings of black former slaves. Their discussions demonstrate how information generated by a particular slave system can raise questions of wider application both about types of evidence and about different functions of slavery.

Lara discusses a wide range of representations of Brazilian slaves drawn by Carlos Julião (born in Turin in 1740), an engineer in the Portuguese army, trained as a military draughtsman, who left Portugal for Rio during the Napoleonic occupation and died there in 1814. While Julião's unsophisticated style of drawing apparently enhances the value of his representations of the customs and costumes of colonial Brazil as a direct historical source, they are surprisingly difficult and complex to analyse. The wealth and poverty of his subjects, as indicated by their dress, makes no correlation with colour: there are apparently prosperous black women and poor whites. Rather, details of dress code, such as the presence or absence of footwear, and its type, help to distinguish between freeborn, freed and slave status. Julião's drawings fit in well with a picture of slavery in Brazil as offering at least the possibility of cultural integration, though the picture is not a simple one. Black slaves are usually barefoot and are shown in work situations. The dress of both freed and slave blacks often presents a mixture of European and African features, the black slave being sometimes entirely dressed in ethnic style. However, Lara wisely discourages excessive speculation both about the artist's intentions and about any symbolic significance of these differences for the wearers.

Slenes, in contrast, discusses the representation of Brazilian slaves in the lithographs and engravings of an early nineteenth-century Bavarian-born artist, Johann Moritz Rugendas. These were aimed primarily at a Parisian public associated with the *Société de la morale Chrétienne*. Rugendas tried to rouse the emotions of the viewer by assimilating the suffering of African slaves, during the Atlantic crossing and in their life in Brazil, to images of suffering and of moral nobility familiar in European culture. These included widely known images of exemplars of tragic pagan virtue such as Lucretia, or even reminiscences of popular woodcut representations of Christ or Abraham.

Krueger reports on a project to collect slave and ex-slave narratives from Brazil. This raises major questions, of which ancient world historians are all too well aware, about the possibility of providing accounts of the slave experience originating from if not always generated by slaves. Brazilian slavery has produced virtually no autobiographical literary texts; in fact there are remarkably few documented utterances by slaves. Some were preserved in accounts of hearings by inquisition courts, which continued well into the nineteenth century. A few others were dictated, often when approaching death, by illiterate ex-slaves. Two bodies of written work come from largely self-

educated slaves, a man and a woman, the latter being Brazil's first black woman writer.

Rosa Egipcíaca ('Madre Rosa'), a former slave prostitute, became a devout Catholic. Claiming religious visions, she issued prophecies, and produced many inflammatory writings castigating the attitudes of Brazilian white slave-owning society through one of its major institutions, the Church. She was even subjected to investigation by the Portuguese inquisition.

The other, Luis Gama was equally unusual, being an intellectual and a vocal political and abolitionist campaigner. He is best known for his vehement and satirical abolitionist verse, in which he both celebrated black African physical beauty and asserted the irrelevance of racial characteristics such as colour in assessing the real worth of a human being.

The implications of the relative paucity of Brazilian slave texts compared to the number from North America are considerable. The production of North American slave memoirs was fostered by anti-slavery abolitionists. In Brazil, where there was no abolitionist movement aiming to persuade the white literate middle class, there was no encouragement for former slaves to write their memoirs. This raises the question of the extent to which the content of North American narratives may be seen simply as the direct reporting of slaves' reactions to their experience, and how much, as suggested by Bernier, may have been 'editorialized' to meet the expectations of a white readership.

Between the divisive elitist views of free writers in the ancient world to their outright rejection by writers such as Gama, a range of attitudes and approaches is revealed in the material discussed in this collection. No attempt is made here to develop some kind of theoretical basis for a comparative approach to the history of slavery. Nevertheless, some specific cross-disciplinary comparisons and contrasts emerge, which provide potential for further rewarding research and exchange of information, both within and between disciplines. A comparative approach should remind us that our own 'slavery' is not unique; that it is not typical; and that it most certainly does not represent a norm. It can draw our attention to new questions developed by colleagues working on other slave systems; to the absence of aspects present in other systems; and crucially to the presence and absence of types of evidence that have not traditionally been examined in our own academic field. Nevertheless, claims that it can generate overarching models should leave us sceptical. Past experience should serve as a warning.

THE ANCIENT WORLD

Inverted *Kalokagathia*

INGOMAR WEILER

The beauty of the body is something animal, if
there is not any reason concealed behind it
(*somatos kallos zoodes, en me nous hypei*).

– Democritus of Abdera ¹

Kalokagathia: Definition

The expression *kalokagathia* is known to mean nobleness, goodness; ‘it is a composite word from the Greek *kalos kai agathos*, meaning “beautiful and good”, signifying physical and moral excellence’, as Stephen Miller states.² The Greek scholar Nicholas Yalouris writes that ‘it is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct this ideal today, for its content is the product of a whole culture and way of life’.³ He compares it to the modern Greek expression ‘*palikari*, whose chief attributes of bravery and magnanimity are also contained in the ancient Greek concept of *kalokagathia*’.

The compound noun rarely appears in ancient Greek. The content hidden within the formula goes back to earlier centuries. The earliest literary evidence dates from the second half of the fifth century and in the fourth century BC.⁴ One example: in the *Lysis* dialogue, Plato describes the *neaniskos* (young man) Lysis in the *palaestra* (a low building with a central courtyard especially used for wrestling),⁵ ‘who stood among the boys and the young men wearing a garland on his head and of a distinct appearance, worthy to be called not just beautiful, but imbued with *kalokagathia*’.

In a Greek inscription Zeus himself is honoured by the epithet *kalakagathios* [*sic*].⁶ Generally, however, the word is associated with male representatives of the aristocracy, and later with the citizenry.⁷ The original aristocratic ideal became ‘democratized with the development of the *polis*’⁸ and was ‘the aim of Athenian education down to the Classical period’.⁹ The *kalokagathos*, seen sociologically, is above all a warrior and citizen, or a youthful athlete.

The combining and intermingling of the aesthetic component with the moral, as postulated and described by Greek authors, recurs in the works of the vase painters and sculptors of the classical period. As personifications, *Kalokagathia* and *Arete* (goodness, excellence) are encountered already in the fifth century, as evidenced by a scholar of late antiquity who mentions a

description of the two figures by Xenophon and Telesilla.¹⁰ Early statues of *kouroi* (young men) have also been identified by modern scholars as 'expressions of an ideal – an aristocratic ideal, moreover – the *Kalos kagathos*'.¹¹ This is also true of the pictorial works of the classical period. The sculptors Myron, with his *Discobolus* (discus-thrower) and Polycletus with the *Doryphorus* (spear-carrier) cast the harmony of body, soul and mind in bronze.¹² Polycletus's treatise *The Canon*, in which beauty (*to kallos*) and health are interpreted positively as symmetry and correct proportions, aroused debate to which later Chrysippus, Vitruvius and Galen (a philosopher, an architect and a physician) contributed.¹³ According to the conventional interpretations of the *Doryphorus* and the *Discobolus*, both statues embody pentathletes. In his description, such an athlete seems to Aristotle to be very close to the ideal of the *kalokagathia*:

Each age has its own beauty. In youth, it lies in the possession of a body capable of enduring all kinds of contests, whether of the racecourse or of bodily strength, while the young man is himself a pleasant delight to behold. It is for this reason that pentathletes are the most beautiful; they are naturally adapted both for exertion of the body and swiftness of foot. In the prime of life, beauty lies in being naturally adapted for the toils of war, in being both a pleasure to look at and yet awe-inspiring.... A strong man is defined as being strong by virtue of his ability to do some or all of these things. Excellence of size is defined as being superior to most men in height, weight, and girth, but in such proportion that the movements of the body are not slowed down by excess. Athletic excellence in a body is defined in terms of the above ... [but] he who excels in everything is fit for the pentathlon.¹⁴

Virtue and bodily strength, swiftness and beauty characterize the perfect and noble man. In antiquity the representation of physiognomic differences between free men and slaves, as can be seen in paintings and sculpture, has a programmatic and not a realistic-individualistic quality. In his analysis of archaeological pictorial evidence L. Schumacher has convincingly developed a catalogue of five criteria for a 'typology of the unfree'.¹⁵ At the same time he has been right to draw his readers' attention to iconological problems that have to do with the fact that changes of social status due to enslavement or manumission were not expressed in an appropriate way in ancient illustrations. Therefore general rules can only be applied with certain restrictions. However, K. Bradley interprets the well-known metamorphosis of Lucius, the hero of Apuleius's novel *The Golden Ass*, as 'a paradigmatic illustration of the animalization of the slave in real life'. He adds:

The asinine form into which he [Lucius, with his 'impeccable character and family pedigree, well educated'] is suddenly changed, however, presents a total contrast: not a change simply from human to animal, but a change

from the heights of human physical perfection to the depths of bestial ugliness: hair turns to bristles, skin to hide, fingers and hands become hooves, a tail grows, the face becomes enormous, with mouth distended, nostrils spreading, lips drooping, and ears long and hairy. The only consolation of which Lucius is aware is an increase in the size of his penis.’¹⁶

This example shows various components of the iconography of slavery which will be discussed later on.

The Physiognomic Concept

Behind the *kalokagathia* ideal hides a trivial physiognomic concept ‘of the systematic correspondence of psychological characteristics to facial features or body structures’.¹⁷ Proclus Diadochus, the author of a commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus*, is apparently thinking of an anthropological constant when he asserts that a preference for the beautiful and a turning away from those ugly *kata physin* (by nature) is explicable.¹⁸

In the Aristotelian writing *On Physiognomies*¹⁹ ‘the fundamental connection of body and soul’²⁰ is according ‘to a list – a complete list – of the sources from which physiognomic signs are drawn. They are as follows: movements, gestures of the body, colour, characteristic facial expression, the growth of hair, the smoothness of the skin, the voice, condition of the flesh, the parts of the body and the physical build as a whole. Such is the list that physiognomists always give the sources where they find their signs [evidence]’.²¹ In [chapter 6](#) the author mentions the physical criteria for his physiognomic argumentation: foot, ankles, lower leg, knock-knees, buttocks, waist, belly, back, sides, upper part of the back, shoulders, clavicles, neck, lips, nose, face, eyes, forehead, head, ears, hue, hair, step, gesture, eyes, stature.²² He is convinced that mentality and character correspond to appearance, and he formulates the following priorities:

The clearest indications are given by signs in certain particularly suitable parts of the body. The most suitable part of all is the region of the eyes and forehead, head and face; next to it comes the region of the chest and shoulders, and next again, that of the legs and feet; while the belly and neighbouring parts are of least service. In a word, the clearest signs are derived from those parts in which intelligence is most manifest.²³

The Suggestive Power of the *Kalokagathia* Ideal and the Reverse

The ideal of *kalokagathia* serves as an instrument for the exclusion of noncitizens, foreign ethnic and social-fringe groups. There is no lack of documentation showing that the targeted implementation of this ideological argument was not only common among the Greeks (and with us today), but

was also practised in the Roman world. Citing Quintilian, Bradley writes: 'The assumption of a physical difference between slave and free was part of the process by which slaves were visualized in the Roman mind: not a difference of race or colour as in the New World slave cultures ... but one that simply distinguished between ugliness and beauty, between what was seemly and what was not'.²⁴

The wide acceptance of the concept of a correlation between the external appearance of a person and that person's character is, in my opinion, not least to be explained by the basically trivial pattern behind the circumstance, which suggests a causal connection between physical and moral excellence. No inclination towards basically rethinking this matter was to be found in ancient times; the negative opinion of slaves has always drowned the few voices of opposition. The traditional slave cliché appears to have been irreversible. To again quote Bradley²⁵ positively: 'The ideology of servile inferiority was too deeply embedded in the collective consciousness for a radical, large-scale change in moral perspective ever to emerge from below, and without that necessary precondition progressive change was impossible.'

The persistence of this ideological pattern, as already mentioned, survives antiquity. Fairy stories and trivial literature, including science-fiction novels and comics, remain to this day within this tradition of naive thought. And it seems to me that it has fatal consequences.

'An ill-proportioned body indicates a rogue': The Literary Version of the 'Reverse of the *Kalokagathos*'

Those victims of the above-mentioned pseudo-physiognomic causal explanation are obliged to be confronted with the reverse side of this ideal, which I would like to describe here as 'the reverse of *kalokagathia*'. It is this idea of physical ugliness, human abnormality, deformity, illness and handicap which both is indicative of a corresponding character and mind and corresponds with social degradation. The treatise *On Physiognomies* amounts to this prejudice, beginning with the assertion: 'Mental character is not independent of and unaffected by bodily processes ... and contrariwise the body is evidently influenced by the affections of the soul – by the emotions of love and fear and by states of pleasure and pain.'²⁶ In the ensuing argument one reads: 'This is well exemplified by drunkenness (*methai*) and sickness (*arrhostiai*), where altered bodily conditions produce obvious mental modifications.'²⁷

Very similarly, by using a scientific perspective, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* gives a reason for the causal connection as follows: 'Inasmuch as genetic flaws are sometimes revealed by physical characteristics (e.g., the characteristic appearance of Down's syndrome, with up-slanted eyes and a broad, flat face), some elements of physiognomy evolved in physiology and biochemistry.'²⁸

But again turning to the writings of Aristotle, here the reverse of a beautiful

and healthy body gives rise to the following diagnosis:

An ill-proportioned body indicates a rogue, the argument being partly from congruity and partly from the female sex. But if bad proportions mean villainy, a well-proportioned frame must be characteristic of upright men and brave; only, the standard of the right proportions must be sought in the good training and good breeding in the body, and not in the male type, as we said at the beginning.²⁹

In a variation of Juvenal's famous adage, one can say: *mens insana in corpore insano* (an unsound mind in an unsound body).³⁰ A critical objection to the ideology that this abridged version wishes to express is formulated by John Chrysostom when he asserts that it is 'unlikely, almost impossible, that a beautiful soul should reside in a beautiful body; because when there is cultivation of the one, there is neglect of the other'.³¹ The opinions of the ecclesiastical writers correspond here with the Roman satirist, who elsewhere proclaims:

Good looks and decent behaviour too seldom are found
In the same person. However old-fashioned his background,
However strict the morality on which he was brought up –
And even if Nature, with generous, kindly hand has
Turned him out a pure-minded, modestly blushing
Youth ...
Manliness still is denied him.³²

The central thought behind Aristotle's physiognomy, which corresponds to the abridgement of the Juvenal quote, is to be found also in the Homeric epics. In the second book of the *Iliad*, the rebellious scoundrel and outsider Thersites rails against the Greek leaders, especially Agamemnon, Odysseus and Achilles. Thersites, a soldier in the Greek army waiting outside Troy, is described by Homer as

A man of many words, and those unseemly; a monger of sedition, a railer against all who were in authority, who cared not what he said as long as he could set the Achaeans laughing. He was the ugliest man of all those that came before Troy – bandy-legged, lame of one foot, with his two shoulders rounded and hunched over his chest. His head ran up to a point, but there was little hair on the top of it. Achilles and Odysseus hated him worst of all, for it was with them that he was most wont to wrangle; now, however, with a shrill squeaky voice he began heaping his abuse on Agamemnon. The Achaeans were angry and disgusted, yet none the less he kept on brawling and bawling at the son of Atreus.³³

Thersites the troublemaker is depicted as extremely ugly. I call this

physiognomic concept ‘inverted *kalokagathia*’, since a connection is suggested between Thersites’s ‘bad’ character and his physical appearance; similar contrasts between bad or low-born people and noble heroes also occur elsewhere in Homer. This simplistic notion that good people are also beautiful and bad ones ugly is as old as European literature. Hermann Strasburger offers the hypothesis that such a system of social values originated in the leaders of a primitive patriarchal society. Qualities such as courage, intelligence, wealth, beauty and good character were thought to characterize the high-born, and their opposites the low-born. It is also significant that the Cynic philosophers, with their external appearances, protested with perfect awareness against the values of the *kalokagathia* – and admired Thersites.³⁴

Ugliness provoked contempt and derision. Aesop, the writer of fables, who according to tradition was a slave, is described in the *Life of Aesop* as ‘pot-bellied, misshapen of head, snub-nosed, swarthy, dwarfish, bandy-legged, short-armed, squint-eyed, liver-lipped’.³⁵ He appears in the account of an imaginary banquet in Elysium by Lucian (a Greek writer of the second century AD) performing as a jester described as ‘humpbacked and malformed’.³⁶

People like professional jesters, fools and mime actors found no difficulty in making people laugh, since, according to Quintilian, ‘laughter is never far removed from derision’.³⁷ This judgement implies that such people were regarded as socially and morally contemptible. Similarly, behind the stigmatization of Thersites there is a mentality that ultimately turns the *kalokagathia* ideal inside out.

In the *Politics* of Aristotle there is a natural, clear distinction between the body and the soul of the free man and of the slave, but the philosopher speaks of remarkable exceptions and the necessity of differentiation:

But it is nature’s intention also to erect a physical difference between the body of the free man and that of the slave, giving the latter strength for the menial duties of life, but making the former upright in carriage and (though useless for physical labour) useful for the various purposes of the civic life – a life which tends, as it develops, to be divided into military service and the occupations of peace. The contrary of nature’s intention, however, often happens: there are some slaves who have the bodies of free men – as there are others who have a free man’s soul. But if nature’s intention were realized – if men differed from one another in bodily form as much as the statues of the gods [differ from the human figure] – it is obvious that we should all agree that the inferior class ought to be the slaves of the superior. And if this principle is true when the difference is one of the body, it may be affirmed with still greater justice when the difference is one of the soul; though it is not as easy to see the beauty of the soul as it is to see that of the body.³⁸

Cartledge analyses the description of the bodies of masters and their slaves in terms of the sets of opposing characteristics (Greek-barbarian, men-women,

citizen-alien, free-slave, gods-mortals) forming the basis of Greek moral and social attitudes. He points to inconsistency in Aristotle's attempts to apply such contrasts in his treatise *On Physiognomies*:

For the posture of the natural slave is less erect than that of the natural master, so that the former is better suited to performing tasks involving stooping (manual crafts and agriculture), whereas the latter was intended by nature to practise the *politikos bios*, the life of a Greek citizen or actively political member of a *polis* in both war and peace. This latter is, to say the least, a weak, indeed a broken-backed, supporting argument. But the reason why Aristotle adduces it now emerges: whereas it is not so simple to identify securely the nature of a person's *psukhê*, his or her posture is immediately and irrefutably apparent; and as the contemporary Aristotelian tract entitled *On Physiognomies* (80ba7–8) puts it (though this work associates upright posture with masculinity rather than freedom), 'permanent bodily signs will indicate permanent mental qualities'. However, even as he adduces it, Aristotle himself exposes its weakness. 'Very often', he confesses, 'the exact opposite is the case'. 'Natural' free men, that is to say, stoop and so have (ser)ville bodies.³⁹

Here we are concerned with the rule and its exceptions. However, the general and dominating view of the physiognomy of the slave is the converse of *kalokagathia* – in the words of Cartledge, 'the stereotype image prevalent in the consciousness of ordinary Greeks-in-the-agora barbershop during the fifth and fourth centuries'.⁴⁰

The characteristics of a Roman slave produced at least according to the moral degradation and the racial understanding of the day a similar prejudice. 'But while the Romans passed down', writes Bradley,

from generation to generation a stereotyped portrait of the slave as an unscrupulous, lazy and criminous being, and while they thought of certain races, Asiatic, Greeks, Syrians and Jews, as being born for slavery, and while they thought certain punishments like crucifixion and burning alive were suitably servile, they never thought of any one form of work as being specifically appropriate just for slaves.⁴¹

Instances of beautiful slaves in ancient sources generally concern prostitution or special exceptional cases.⁴² Columella recommends the farm overseer, the *vilicus*, not to appoint⁴³ 'the sort of slaves who are physically attractive, and certainly not from that class which has busied itself with the voluptuous occupations of the city'.

The Reverse of *Kalokagathia* in the Pictorial World

While the negative pattern reaches back to the beginnings of European

literature, the concept of the reverse of *kalokagathia* is to be found only somewhat later in vase paintings and sculpture. In the works of several competent modern authors such as R. Garland, N. Himmelmann, F.M. Snowden and P. Zanker, who deal with the illustrations of slaves and social outsiders,⁴⁴ one finds a number of criteria for the iconographie stigmatization of these groups of people, among them

ugly facial features, physical deformities, shameless nakedness, protruding posteriors, bodies marked by age, lined faces, monkey-like physiognomy, tooth stumps ... and a little snub nose, comical dislocations, the motif of the squatting position with legs spread wide which for a free man was considered unworthy and rude and was more attributable to a Philistine an expressively bent Negro figure, barbaric features, uncombed hair, rough clothing, a barbaric hulking type of head.⁴⁵

Zanker describes workers, whom he correctly identifies as slaves, in the following way: 'The foremen set themselves apart by means of raw facial features, a stubble beard, hooked nose, long legs, etc ... ugly, sick bodies made redundant through advanced age.'⁴⁶ The German archaeologist knows of their figurative counterparts in the stereotyped comic stage character of the 'old woman' the 'same of which, irrespective of which role they play ... were always characterized with the stereotype of the ugly, gossipy, greedy, lecherous and, above all, alcoholic'.⁴⁷

Snowden tells of an 'Ethiopian-Scythian formula' and adds: 'The swarthy – Egyptians and Ethiopians – as well as the woolly-haired, were cowardly, according to certain physiognomical interpretations.'⁴⁸ In his collection of slave depictions – according to Wiedemann 'the most accessible short survey' on the theme – Himmelmann⁴⁹ points to 'exotic Negro slaves', 'grooms' as the 'prototype of the barbaric-slavish characteristic' and to 'dwarf-like servants', who as companions to the athletes and pupils, and due to the prevalent perspective of importance in the iconographie tradition, are depicted in reduced size as *paidēs* and *paidagogoi* (boys and child-minders).

Together with these iconographie details, the type of occupation also naturally plays an important role. The disrespectful depiction of the body appears to be defined by the Philistine and banausic ideology of antiquity. In any case, together with the athlete's *paidēs* and the servants of both sexes, the archaeologists have added the following workers to the category of slaves: wet nurses, weapon carriers, charcoal bearers, camel drivers, courtesans, symposium boys, acrobats, female flute-players and dancers, sacrificial servants, pottery boys, travel companions, blacksmiths, shepherds and mine-workers.⁵⁰

To this are added depictions of bound prisoners of war, as they are seen on diverse victory monuments (e.g. the columns of Traian and Marcus Aurelius) and the numerous depictions of gladiators, a particularly impressive example of which is a small bronze from Pompeii showing a dwarf-like gladiator with a

false penis in a dog design.

Hellenistic clay vessels are sometimes given the form of a crouching Negro slave.⁵¹ An example of especially high quality, which must have been made around the middle of the third century, depicts an unattractive

skinny boy with muscular legs, his typical facial features depicted pronouncedly and with exaggeration. He has been drinking and sleeps and snores instead of attending to his duties. He sits naked and freezing on the floor, utterly without shame, which one would certainly not expect of a slave. We find here the same interest for the special physical and psychical condition of a body. With the captivating description of a common evaluation, are expressed both physical and moral qualities.⁵²

Zanker compares these slaves typologically with the 'alcoholic old woman' in the Munich *Glyptothek* (Museum of sculpture) and arrives at the following final characterization: 'In this system, since archaic times, ugly and absurd bodies were of the same significance as those of captives or mentally handicapped people. Bodies crippled or deformed through work, bestial physiognomic features, a long penis etc. were the traditional iconographie elements that marked these people'.⁵³

Entertainers are an especially stigmatized group (*gelotopoioi*). They are seen in vase pictures and in the form of statues, whereby it is noticeable that these groups of persons appear, above all, in the entertainment culture of antiquity and at symposiums and *convivia*, such as dinner parties. They are generally depicted as dwarf-like or crippled in scenes where merriment is meant to be excited in the viewer. Because they occasionally gave of their best in light entertainment without being invited to the banquets, they were described as *akletoi* (uninvited). A characterization of these dancers and artists has been offered by Burkhard Fehr. He distinguishes two typical facets here: 'Firstly, during the banquet the *akletos* displays his ugliness, weakness, voracity, or whatever has been occasioned by chance and unintentionally, thus making the invited guests laugh as they feel their superiority. Secondly, the physical and moral inferiority of the *akletos* is revealed consciously and on purpose: the *akletos*, as it were, *performs himself*'.⁵⁴ The *akletoi* present themselves as sexually stimulating, lascivious and drunken social outsiders, as handicapped persons, 'but it is not always easy to decide whether they twist their feet on purpose to imitate a limp, or whether they are actually physically disabled'.⁵⁵ Through his analysis of the pictures on Corinthian vases, the author forms the opinion that the so-called 'padded or heavy-bellied dancers' express their physical and moral inferiority with the help of body language.⁵⁶

A mythical version recalls the coming and going of these entertainers. The theriomorphic and dwarf-like features of the companions in the sphere of the Dionysus cult, as they appear in myth as well as in Dionysian *symposia* and the *komos-scenes* at the theatre,⁵⁷ apparently present their merriment and boisterousness as a reflection of those semi-professional jesters.

This type of person, as conceived by the poets, philosophers and artists of antiquity, which depicts an alternative to the *kalokagathia* ideal, belongs within the motif category of a 'topsy-turvy world'. Moreover, this type stands in strong contrast to the heroic slave pictures and statues such as were erected in modern times – not only from the perspective of Marxist ideology – in memory of Spartacus or Eunus, the latter erected by the 'commune di Enna'. These memorials remain within the classic aesthetic tradition of depicting athletes.⁵⁸

The Social Position and the Area of Activity of the Handicapped

For this universal mental attitude of the so-called 'leisure class', and especially for the entertainers mentioned, the sociologist Thorsten Veblen⁵⁹ coined the term 'conspicuous consumption', a term that has been adopted by scholars in classical studies. This mentality also manifested itself in the physiognomic ideas of the upper class, as P. Veyne in his monumental study *Bread and Circuses* has shown.⁶⁰ Veyne speaks in this context of 'ostentation and narcissism'. The measure of this sociocentric view of the élite is always that of *kalokagathia*, which formed the pattern as an ideal with which the others, the outsiders and slaves, were contrasted. Alternatives were sought where this ideal of a physical aesthetic was not achieved by the aristocrats and citizens, where the harmony of body and mind was evidently missing. Handicaps were concealed, statues and portraits idealized. The Spartan king, Agesilaus, for instance, was a cripple from birth; Pericles had an elongated and squill-shaped head; the sculptures of the bodies of Alexander and Emperor Claudius were handsome and physically perfect, even though the men appeared otherwise in reality.⁶¹ That was not, of course, an unshakeable rule. Famous men were occasionally depicted unfavourably or without improvement on purpose. Pictures of Socrates, Diogenes of Sinope, Aesop, sophists in discussion and other intellectuals, give powerful emphasis to the divergence from the ideal harmonious portrait (through not wishing to appear portrait-like).⁶² Caricature was not unknown in antiquity.

Physical handicaps were dealt with in various ways and according to their social aspects. In contrast to the behaviour of the élite, as just described, Robert Garland considers the underprivileged circles of society, which naturally include slaves, and emphatically states: 'The situation was rather different in the case of a person of no social distinction, whose deformity was so well-known that it positively invited reproduction'.⁶³ In the *Laws* of Plato, this sociological aspect is considered: the philosopher speaks of the comparison between 'noble bodies and generous souls' on the one hand and 'uncomely persons and thoughts' on the other. In his social design, the philosopher expects manual activities, the work of the farmers and slaves, to be passed over to the aliens and metics.⁶⁴ The citizen was not to be bothered with any of it. For the sensible person, Plato developed a training programme, which together with gymnastics and agonistics, dance and science, stipulated the study of

serious literature and tragedy. In contrast, the sensible man was not permitted to perform comedy or anything ridiculous. In this case the citizenry would lose its virtue (*arete*), because it was not in accord with the middle-class ideal of the *kalokagathos*.⁶⁵ Plato expects of a citizen that 'He should command slaves and hired strangers to imitate such things, but he should never take any serious interest in them himself, nor should any free man or free woman be discovered taking pains to learn them; and there should always be some element of novelty in the imitation.'⁶⁶ Here a chasm opens up between the middle class and other social categories. Entertainers, jesters and comedians thus count among the marginal groups, whose social status is also often defined by the stigma of physical deviance.⁶⁷ It may be that prominent personalities – as noted briefly above – are also known to have had physical afflictions, but they are not for that reason pushed into a marginal existence. The *kalokagathia* proved itself to be an additional social distinction. Those not meeting the physically aesthetic ideal are pushed to the fringe of society. Wiedemann's definition of the outsider is to be utterly agreed with in this context when he writes:

What is 'marginal', of course, has to be defined with reference to what is 'central', and different societies may have quite different ideas as to what should be at the centre of social life: in terms of buildings it meant the cathedral, the palace, the parliament, the stock exchange or the sports hall. In a Greek and Roman city, it was the agora or forum, the meeting-place of free, adult male citizens.⁶⁸

The Market

The purchase of slaves took place at public markets. Here, specific rules were in effect. The 'wares' had to be in sound physical condition (i.e. strong and healthy) and free from undesirable character defects. Interested parties generally went to the slave market accompanied by expert friends, or even with doctors, as advisers.⁶⁹ That the body of the slave was no different to the body of an ox, as an object at a public exhibition, was illustrated by the institution of the *catasta*, a platform or a sort of open cage on which slaves were exposed for sale.⁷⁰ The buyer was offered here the opportunity to examine physical qualities. Aulus Gellius mentions an aedile's edict concerning the selling of slaves: 'One should take care that the register of every individual slave is so [comprehensively] completed that one can immediately discern from which illness, or from which affliction each slave suffers, whether the slave was a fugitive (*fugitivus*), or a wanderer (*erro*).'⁷¹ The slave dealer in Rome was obliged to give correct information about his wares. This could take place verbally or by an identity sign (*titulus*), which was hung around the slave's neck. The right of return could be exercised following false information given concerning the quality of the wares (*merx*).⁷² Bradley takes detailed particulars concerning the physical condition and health of the

Pedius writes that a man who has one eye or one jaw bigger than the other is healthy, so long as he can use both properly; for he says that a discrepancy between jaws, eyes or arms is no ground for rescission if it does not affect the slave's ability to perform his duties. But imbalance, or the fact that one leg is shorter than the other, can be a hindrance to such performance, and so a slave, thus affected, is for rescission. If a slave speaks gutturally or has protruding eyes from birth, he is regarded as healthy. It should also be known that left-handedness is neither a defect nor a disease, unless the slave uses his left hand by reason of the weakness of the right; such a slave is not left-handed but defective. It has been asked whether one whose breath smells is healthy. Trebatius says that it is not a disease that one's breath smells like that of a goatherd or scabrous person for this is an accident of exhalation. But if it be due to a bodily defect, such as liver or lung complaint or something similar, the slave is diseased.⁷³

But buyers were not interested only in reliable, healthy and physically strong slaves. The demand for deformed people, those, so to speak, representing the reverse of the *kalokagathia*, appears not to have been slight in antiquity. In the treatise *On the Sublime* by Pseudo-Longinus, we read:

'For the day of slavery', as Homer has it, 'takes away half our manhood' [*Odyssey* 17, 322]. Just as the cages (if what I hear is true) in which are kept the Pygmies, commonly called *nani*, not only hinder the growth of the creatures confined within them, but actually attenuate them through the bonds which beset their bodies, so one has aptly termed all servitude (though it be most righteous) the cage of the soul and a public prison-house.⁷⁴

Also according to Aristotle⁷⁵ physical deformities are induced unnaturally; the philosopher mentions a method of breeding small animals and dwarfs which follows the two principles of a limited quantity of nutrition and narrowness of a cage-like space. This guarantees the obviously intended stunted growth.⁷⁶ There was a 'market for crooks or villains' in Athens, which was called the *Kerkopon agora*.⁷⁷ The name is a derivation of Kerkopes, the two mischievous gnome-like and physically deformed goblins who played an episodic role in the Hercules myth. The word *kerkops* means, as such, devious rogue and the verb *kerkopizein* translates as 'to play the ape'.⁷⁸ Although nothing more is known in detail of this Athenian agora, in context with the quotation from Aristotle's *Problemata* and the following well-known extract from Plutarch concerning a Roman market for freaks, there appears to have been interest in the purchase of these artificially groomed slaves.

Plutarch reports a market of the deformed, a *teraton agora*, in Rome:

Busybodies (*polypragmones*), however, by gleanings and gathering the blunders and errors and solecisms, not of lines or poems, but of lives, carry about with them a most inelegant and unlovely record-box of evils, their own memory. Therefore just as at Rome there are some who take no account of paintings or statues or even, by Heaven, of the beauty of the boys and women for sale, but haunt the monster-market, examining those who have no calves, or are weasel-armed, or have three eyes, or ostrich-heads, and searching to learn whether there has been born some 'commingled shape and misformed prodigy' – yet if one continually conducts them to such sights, they will soon experience satiety and nausea; so let those who are curious about life's failures, the blots on the scutcheon, the delinquencies and errors in other people's homes, remind themselves that their former discoveries have brought them no favour or profit. ⁷⁹

Epilogue

Concerning the question of the reverse of *kalokagathia*, it is not only a matter of the principles of physical aesthetics, middle-class identity or the forming of a physiognomic theory. Physical abnormalities, deformities, dwarfism, illnesses, permanent damage following accidents, deviant behaviour and ugliness had practical consequences. Only the unscathed and healthy were generally permitted to hold political office, or to become priests and priestesses. The finding of an inscription from Beroea illustrates this degradation and simultaneously shows the social context in which slaves are classified. The document names the kinds of people forbidden to remove their clothes in the local *gymnasium*, which would have amounted to prohibiting access.⁸⁰ Together with slaves, it affected free men and their sons, the physically unschooled, in other words the physically handicapped, artisans, small dealers, alcoholics, the mentally handicapped and homosexuals.

Slaves, above all those who were obliged to undertake physical work, were presented with the additional problem of the loss of their physical integrity and a decidedly reduced life expectation. Garland points to an enormously high risk of becoming crippled. What that means is signalled by a statement attributed to Pericles,⁸¹ observing a slave breaking his leg: 'There's another *paidagogos*'. Garland, whose monograph is subtitled 'Disability and Deformity in the Greco-Roman World', noted in Latin literature, above all, a frequent mention of deformed slaves and presented evidence that some Roman slave-owners deliberately maimed their slaves for purely sadistic reasons.⁸² It is certainly no coincidence that numerous 'wanted' posters of runaway slaves indicate facial scars as precise distinguishing marks.⁸³ A former slave was described by the philosopher Bion with the following words: 'He had no face, but rather a painting on his face, an expression of the cruelty of his master'.⁸⁴

Torture, punishment by beating, accidents at work, branding and whipping may have been the causes of such deformities. In this connection, M.I. Finley reminds us of a passage from Demosthenes, who was of the opinion that slaves

are, on principle, held responsible with their bodies for any transgression.⁸⁵ These physical, psychic and mental consequences, resulting from the rough treatment dealt out by slave masters, are not completely neutralized even by manumission – ‘the most fundamental metamorphosis that one can imagine’.⁸⁶ In comparison to the freed blacks of the New World, the slaves of antiquity, as Finley emphasizes, had a great advantage: the colour of their skin. The human body still holds a conspicuous stigma in modern times.⁸⁷

NOTES

1. Democritus, F 105. Democritus of Abdera was a fifth century B.C. Greek philosopher.
2. St.G. Miller, *Arete. Ancient Writers, Papyri, and Inscriptions on the History and Ideals of Greek Athletics and Games*, 2nd edn. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), p.216.
3. Yalouris (ed.), *The Olympic Games in Ancient Greece* (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1976), p.53.
4. Jüthner, ‘Kalokagathia’, in *Charisteria. Alois Rzach zum 80. Geburtstag dargebracht* (Reichenberg: Stiepel, 1930), pp.99–119.
5. Plato, *Lysis*, 207a.
6. Schwabl, ‘Zum Kult des Zeus in Kleinasien (II). Der phrygische Zeus Bennios und Verwandtes’, *Acta Antiqua Hungarica*, 39 (1999), pp.345–54, esp. 346–8.
7. On analogous concepts for girls see E. Specht, *Schön zu sein und gut zu sein* (Vienna: Frauenverlag, 1989), pp.96–98.
8. W.J. Raschke (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Olympics* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin University Press, 1988), p.39.
9. Yalouris, *The Olympic Games in Ancient Greece*, pp.52–64.
10. R. Foerster (ed.), *Scriptores Physiognomonici Graeci et Latini* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1893), Vol.2, p.238; cf. *Scholion on Odyssey* 13,289 (ed. L. Dindorf).
11. Raschke, *The Archaeology of the Olympics*, p.39.
12. On various interpretations cf. T. Lorenz, ‘Der Doryphoros des Polyklet: Athlet, Musterfigur, politisches Denkmal oder mythischer Held?’, *Nikephoros*, 4 (1991), pp. 177–90.
13. H. Philipp, ‘Zu Polyklets Schrift »Kanon«’, in H. Beck (ed.), *Polyklet. Der Bildhauer der griechischen Plastik* (Frankfurt/Main: Liebieghaus, 1990), pp. 135–55, 138–40.
14. Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 1361b1 ff.
15. L. Schumacher, *Sklaverei in der Antike. Alltag und Schicksal der Unfreien* (Munich: Beck, 2001), pp.65–90.
16. K.R. Bradley, ‘Animalizing the Slave: The Truth of Fiction’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 90 (2000), pp.110–25, esp. 113–14.
17. Cf. the definition in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (see note 28).
18. Proclus, *Eis ton Timaeon* [Tim. 34b], 173c.
19. English translation: T. Loveday and E. S. Forster, in: J. Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford*, 4th printing (Oxford and Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 1237–50. Greek text and Latin translation: Foerster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici Graeci et Latini*, pp.4–91.
20. *On Physiognomies*, c.1 (805a: Foerster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici Graeci et Latini*, pp.4–8). See also the body-and-mind-discussion in Schumacher, *Sklaverei in der Antike*, pp.252 and 112.
21. *On Physiognomies* c.1 (80ba: Foerster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici Graeci et Latini*, pp.16–18).
22. *Ibid.*, c.44–72 (810a–814b: Foerster, pp.52–90).
23. *Ibid.*, c.73 (814b: Foerster, p.90).
24. *Ibid.*, 11, 3, 83; K.R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 142.
25. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, p. 145.
26. *On Physiognomies* c.1 (805a: Foerster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici Graeci et Latini*, pp.4–10).
27. *Ibid.*, c.1 (805a–b: Foerster, pp.8–13).
28. Cf. the definition in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edn. (Chicago, IL: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1988), Vol.9, p.414.

29. On *Physiognomica* c.72 (814a: Foerster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici Graeci et Latini*, p.88, pp. 15–90, 93).
30. Juvenal, 10, 356: *orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano* (then ask for a sound mind in a sound body).
31. Johannes Chrysostomus, *Homilia 18 in Pauli epistula 1 ad Cor.20*. See W.A. Krenkel, 'Me tua forma capit', *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität Rostock* (Gesellschaftswissenschaftliche Reihe), 33 (1984), pp.50–77, esp. 52. Cf. also Petronius, *Satirikon*, 94. On the harmony of body and soul (after the resurrection) cf. Augustine, *Civitas Dei*, 22, 19 and Plotinus, *Ennead*, I, 6, 1.
32. Juvenal, 10, 297–304.
33. *Iliad* 2, 211–25.
34. I. Nachov, 'Der Mensch in der Philosophie der Kyniker', in R. Müller (ed.), *Der Mensch als das Mass der Dinge* (Berlin: Akademie 1976), pp.361–98, esp. 375.
35. *Vita Aesopi*, 1; see Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, p. 143: 'a veritable monstrosity'. D. Ogden, *The Crooked Kings of Ancient Greece* (London: Duckworth, 1997), p.40: 'The ambivalent reflexivity and reciprocity inherent in the figure of Aesop will become all the more clear when we consider the case of the closely related Thersites.'
36. Lucian, *True History*, 2, 18; Lysippus, *Agathias*, 35.
37. Quintilian, *Institutions*, 6, 3, 7.
38. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1, 1254b27–1255a3. See also Bradley, 'Animalizing the Slave', p. 110.
39. P. Cartledge, *The Greeks. A Portrait of Self and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 125.
40. *Ibid.*, p.38.
41. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, pp.65–6. Cf. also T. Wiedemann, *Slavery. With Addenda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.18, 25: The moral prejudice: slaves are 'indolent and work-shy', 'lazy, talkative, interested only in food, sex, and sleep, compulsive liars, and [they] steal the wine'.
42. Cf. an example concerning the beauty of courtesans: Alexis, *The Equivalent*, F 98. See Eubulus F 139 K. (quoted by Athenaios, 13, 557f). Further arguments and references in F. Kudlien, 'Empticius servus. Bemerkungen zum antiken Sklavenmarkt', *Historia*, 35 (1986), pp.240–56, esp. 248–9.
43. Columella, *De re rustica*, 1, 8, 1.
44. R. Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder. Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp.46–8 (on deformed slaves), N. Himmelfmann, *Archäologisches zum Problem der griechischen Sklaverei* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1971), F.M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); P. Zanker, *Die Maske des Sokrates. Das Bild des Intellektuellen in der antiken Kunst* (Munich: Beck, 1995) and P. Zanker, *Die Trunkene Alte. Das Lachen der Verhöhnnten* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1989); Schumacher, *Sklaverei in der Antike*, pp. 17–22.
45. Zanker, *Die Maske des Sokrates*, p.66; cf. also Zanker, *Die Trunkene Alte*, pp.64–9.
46. Zanker, *Die Maske des Sokrates*, p.66.
47. *Ibid.*, p.24.
48. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, pp. 177–80. More sceptically Bradley, 'Animalizing the Slave', p.112. See also Schumacher, *Sklaverei in der Antike*, p.47 (and his reference to Herodotus, 4, 23).
49. Himmelfmann, *Archäologisches zum Problem der griechischen Sklaverei*, pp.25–6. See also Wiedemann, *Slavery*, p.18.
50. Himmelfmann, *Archäologisches zum Problem der griechischen Sklaverei*, pp.41–4.
51. The inferiority of the slave body is also documented by portraying him or her in a crouching position; Zanker, *Die Trunkene Alte*, p.18, shows in the context of the ideal of *kalokagathia* that the schemata of sitting and standing upright distinguishes free men and slaves. Cf. also Cartledge, *The Greeks*, pp. 124–5.
52. Sleeping Negro slave, clay bottle, Martin von Wagner-Museum, Würzburg; described by Zanker, *Die Trunkene Alte*, pp. 17–18. Cf. also Himmelfmann, *Archäologisches zum Problem der griechischen Sklaverei*, figs. 71 and 72.
53. Zanker, *Die Trunkene Alte*, p.65.
54. B. Fehr, 'Entertainers at the Symposium: The *akletoi* in the Archaic Period', in O. Murray (ed.), *Symptica. A Symposium on the Symposium* (Oxford: University Press, 1990), pp. 185–95, esp. 186.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 185–95, esp. 189–90.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
57. V. Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp.195 and 199; see also T. Lorenz, 'Verwachsene und Verkrüppelte in der antiken Kunst', in I. Weiler (ed.), *Soziale Randgruppen und Aussenseiter im Altertum* (Graz: Leykam, 1988), pp.349–55.
58. Two examples of Soviet illustrations can be found in Wiedemann, *Slavery*, figs. 5 and 8; for the Eunus monument in Enna, see Schumacher, *Sklaverei in der Antike*, fig. 42.
59. T. Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), pp.68–101.
60. P. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses* (London: Penguin Books, 1990).
61. Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, pp.40–4, 111. See also Ogden, *The Crooked Kings of Ancient Greece*, pp.33 and 145 and his theory on 'The Crooked Kings'.
62. Zanker, *Die Maske des Sokrates*, p.39.
63. Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, pp.40–4.
64. Plato, *Laws*, 816b–17e and 806d; 919d.
65. A. Schäfer, *Unterhaltung beim griechischen Symposion* (Mainz: Zabern, 1997), p.86.
66. Plato, *Laws*, 816e.
67. Cf. the Roman examples for stigmatization in Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, p. 144.
68. Wiedemann, *Slavery*, p.3; cf. on the marginality of slaves also Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, pp.76–80.
69. É. Jakab, *Stipulationes aediliciae (a kellékhibákért való helytállás kialakulása és szabályai a római jogban)* (Szeged: Kiadványunk rövidítése, 1993), summary in German (pp. 157–200), p. 163.
70. W.W. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908 [reprint 1970]), p.39, and Schumacher, *Sklaverei in der Antike*, p.55.
71. Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 4, 2, 1; see Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*, pp.53–6; cf. also Schumacher, *Sklaverei in der Antike*, p.62, and Bradley, 'Animalizing the Slave', p.111.
72. Jakab, *Stipulationes aediliciae*, p. 168.
73. Dig. 21. 1. 12. 1–4; see Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, p.52.
74. Pseudo-Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 44, 5.
75. Aristotle, *Problemata*, 10, 12, 892a.
76. Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, p. 157.
77. Suda s.v. *Harpokration* and Hesychus s.v. *agora Kerkopon*; Diogenes Laertius 9, 114.
78. See LSJ s.v. *kerkopizein*; Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, p. 190.
79. Plutarch, *De curiositate*, 10 [520c].
80. *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 27.1977.261 (32.1982.634); inscription from Beroea about the gymnasiarchal law (about 150 BC), B, 26–29: P. Gauthier and M.B. Hatzopoulos, *La loi gymnasiarchique de Beroia* (Athens: Kentron Hellenikes kai Romaïkes Archaïotetos, 1993), *Meletemata*, 16, pp.20–1.
81. Hieronymus of Rhodes ap. Stobaeus, *Anthologion*, 31,121; cf. Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, p.22.
82. Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, pp.22, 46, 51.
83. R. Scholl, *Corpus der Ptolemäischen Sklaventexte* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990), 3 Teile, Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei, Beiheft 1, Nos. 61, 62, 63, 77, 78, 81. See also Bradley, 'Animalizing the Slave', p. 117, and Schumacher, *Sklaverei in der Antike*, p.62.
84. Diogenes Laertius, 4, 46; concerning the physical disability and invalidity of slaves as a result of severe punishment like flogging see H. Klees, *Sklavenleben im klassischen Griechenland* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998), Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei, 30, pp. 176–217; esp. 195.
85. Demosthenes, 22, 55 (*Against Androtion*): 'Indeed, if you wanted to contrast the slave and the free man, you would find the most important distinction in the fact that slaves are responsible in person for all offences, while free men, even in the most unfortunate circumstances, can protect their persons. For it is in the shape of money that in the majority of cases the law must obtain satisfaction from them; but Androtion on the contrary exacted vengeance from their persons, as if they had been bond-slaves.' M.I. Finley, *Die Sklaverei in der Antike* (Munich: Beck, 1981), p. 112. See also Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, p.166 about 'the Roman practices of flogging, burning and racking the body'. Reducing slaves to their mere body in verbal descriptions is another documentation of their status in W.L. Westermann, *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1955), *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society*, 40, p.5 (on *soma andreion* and *soma gynaikeion*): 'Soma alone was not sufficiently explicit for legal use, although it sometimes appears singly with the meaning of "slave" in the loose usage of the classical authors.'

86. E. Levy, 'Libertas and Civitas', *ZRG*, 78 (1961), pp. 142–72, 145, quoted by Finley.
87. Finley, *Die Sklaverei in der Antike*, p.116. I just want to point out some further areas of investigation. One would be the problem of the beautiful bodies of female and male slaves. Another area of investigation is the Greek term *hexis*, i.e. the physical posture as well as the mental disposition of a person. Cf. the German word *Haltung*, which also has this double meaning. Finally there is the general question regarding the nature of the relationship between body and mind. Does the concept of *kalokagathia* imply a causal relationship between the two terms (and if yes, in what way) or does it merely imply a correlation?

Seeing Things: Examining the Body of the Slave in Greek Medicine

NIALl MCKEOWN

What differences might a classical Greek of the fifth or fourth centuries BC have perceived between the body of the slave and the body of the free?¹ There are several ways that one might attempt to answer the question. One could look at the way that Greek slaves were treated, though such an approach often founders in the face of inadequate evidence. It is probably legitimate to assume that slaves did a variety of jobs in both town and countryside, particularly farming, many of them also involved in the fairly unpleasant process of mining.² Legal protection of their persons was comparatively slight.³ As in many other slave societies, the law often served to exaggerate the differences between the body of the free and the body of the slave.⁴ However, given that only a tiny proportion of the literature of the time has survived, and given that virtually none of it is interested in the lives of those at the bottom of society, it is often very difficult to say much about the lived experience of the slave (as opposed to the ideology of the slave-owners). It is particularly difficult, for example, to assess the level of physical coercion used against slaves. Athenian comedy, for example, potentially exaggerates the level of physical violence⁵ and philosophical texts potentially minimize it.⁶ We can certainly say, however, that the body of the slave was seen (perhaps unsurprisingly) as more vulnerable than the free.

There is, however, another way of looking at the body of the slave: leaving aside the issue of differences of treatment, was there a perceived difference in type between the body of the slave and the body of the free? I would like to concentrate on this, partly because the evidence allows us more definitive answers and partly because of the very interesting work recently done in the area.

One should note immediately that the distinction between slave and free in ancient Greece was generally not one of skin colour.⁷ This is explained at least in part by the sources of their slaves, most typically the Balkans and the coast of Turkey, though the enslavement of fellow Greeks was also possible.⁸ This is not to imply that the Greeks were 'colour-blind', just that such distinctions are not particularly important in their view of slavery. They did have a very profound conception of the differences between themselves and non-Greeks,⁹ but those differences were seen generally as cultural rather than as innately

physical.¹⁰

There was, however, a line of Greek thought that could be used to support the idea of a physical distinction between slave and free. Its chief proponent was the philosopher Aristotle. It appears in his work the *Politics*.

Aristotle suggested that nature intended the body of the slave and of the free to be different from one another, each suited to its own task, the former to certain types of work, the latter to the activities of the citizen.¹¹ He admitted that this did not necessarily always hold true, with some slaves having the body of free men and vice versa. Later, in book 7, Aristotle distinguished the Greeks from the peoples around them by another criterion:

Those peoples in cold places and around Europe are full of spirit, but deficient in intelligence and craft and because of this they are free, but are without political organization and are unable to rule their neighbours. Those living around Asia on the other hand, though they are intellectual and skilled in matters of the mind, are also fainthearted and so live ruled and as slaves. The Greek race, on the other hand, since it lives midway between these places, has a share of both things. For truly, it is both spirited and intellectual. And so it is free and best organized and capable of ruling over everyone, if it were to have a single system of government.¹²

Aristotle did seem to believe that large-scale geographical and climatic differences could affect the cleverness or courage of different groups of people, with the Greeks generally either explicitly or implicitly enjoying a position of superiority, despite their own differences from each other.¹³ It was not necessarily true, however, that one could see the differences noted above. Aristotle did not state whether they had any external manifestations, though one might argue, in conjunction with the remarks in book 1, that he rather implied this.

Aristotle's defence of slavery has often been attacked for its inconsistencies and philosophical poverty.¹⁴ His theory has recently been examined by Nancy Demand¹⁵ with reference to some other Greek texts, the Hippocratic medical corpus.¹⁶ There are approximately 70 texts, dating mainly from the late fifth and fourth centuries BC, ascribed to (though almost certainly not written by) the famous doctor Hippocrates.¹⁷ Demand focused on the *Epidemics*, which supply most evidence about patients. She compared what the *Epidemics* say about slave and female patients. I agree with much of what she has to say, but differ fundamentally with her conclusions.

Demand noted that Hippocratic medical texts saw the male/female distinction as a fundamental one.¹⁸ It was felt that child-bearing was the most important role for a woman and her womb was seen as the key organ determining the health of her body. Women differed from men in ways far greater than those suggested by simple differences in sexual apparatus. Crucially, Demand could not find a similar fundamental medical distinction between slave and free (or indeed between barbarian and Greek). She argued:

The cases in the *Epidemics* show the doctors following the general attitude of Greek culture in their theory and treatment of women. In fact, they reinforced the popular belief in the innate inferiority of women by their physiological speculations. In contrast, they looked on differences between slaves and free not as a result of a lack of rational capacity on the part of the slaves, as did Aristotle, but as a result of an inferior barbarian environment or the harsh and hazardous conditions of their working lives.¹⁹

After examining individual case studies, however, she concluded:

In their practical approach, however, the distinction between doctors' views of women's bodies and slaves, bodies proves to be superficial. In practice slaves' bodies were treated for problems related to their labour, and women's bodies for problems related to reproduction. The diverse purposes only seem to spell a difference: the slave's instrumentality is diffused throughout his/her entire body, whereas a woman's instrumentality is focused on one set of organs. Yet, in the end the difference is overridden because, although used differently, the bodies of both women and slaves were instruments. The bodies of both groups were treated as instruments with a single purpose – work in the case of slaves and reproduction in the case of women.... Doctors reflected the larger society and its values when they saw, and treated, slaves and women as uni-dimensional beings.

She reinforces this point by observing that 'In their interest in the effects of heavy or dangerous physical effort, the doctors supported a common Greek belief that physical labour was servile because it caused bodily deformity.'

How far was this true? We, like Demand, face an initial difficulty before we can deal with the problem properly.²⁰ There are a number of possible terms for slaves in the *Epidemics*. *Pais*, *paidion* and *paidiske* are among them. Unfortunately, they could also mean 'boy' (or 'child') or 'girl' as well as slave.²¹ They are used commonly in the *Epidemics*. Can we decide what the terms mean in the context in which they appear? There are, in fact, many occasions where 'slave, or 'child' are equally plausible translations.²² On a few occasions one suspects that 'slave' is more appropriate.²³ Only in two cases can one have any certainty that one is dealing with a slave.²⁴ There are rather more cases in which a translation of *pais* by 'child' seems more appropriate.²⁵ Is this terminological debate important? Yes, and for two reasons. Firstly, an easy translation of *pais* by 'slave' could dramatically alter our image of these texts. On a number of occasions the authors use the *pais* as a unit of comparison with other groups (for example, women or the old).²⁶ If *pais* could generally be translated 'slave' we would be faced with a world in which the slave body (as Aristotle implied) was indeed seen as radically different from the body of the free. Secondly, our estimate of the number of slaves being seen by the authors of these texts is at least partly dependent on how we translate this term. I would suggest however, that *pais* need not be translated as slave

and probably should not be without a supporting reason. This lack of clarity is worrying, but it is not necessarily vital. The individuals designated by *pais* and its cognate terms do not have different types of illnesses from others in the text.²⁷ They are not singled out because of body type. The *pais* is therefore actually very similar to other types of patients.

Other terms assume a menial status, such as *oiketis* or *therapon* or *amphipolis*, and one might expect them to imply a slave status too.²⁸ In addition, context suggests a slave once or twice even when specific ‘slave’ terms are not used.²⁹ Once again, crucially, there is nothing to suggest that the illnesses of such patients are different from those of others.

There is one term that very definitely refers to slaves, and it is used in one of the very few passages to imply a real medical difference between slave and free: *doulos*. The word (or its root) is used on three occasions in the texts. One case simply reports that a slave woman had a problem with her foot.³⁰ If the other cases seem at first sight to support the idea that the body of the slave was in some way different from that of the free, one should remember that those two cases should be set within the context of several hundred case studies. The differences even within these two texts may, however, be more apparent than real. Here is the first: ‘The female slave – after medication a little came up and she choked but, a lot came out below. She died during the night. She was a barbarian.’³¹

It is odd that the author specified that the patient was a ‘barbarian’³² but nothing in the passage suggests that her disease would have developed any differently if she had not been one.³³

The second text is perhaps more interesting:

Women did not suffer the same from the cough, but a few caught a fever, and of those a very few suffered inflammation of the lungs, and they were the older women, and all of them recovered. I imputed this to their not going out like the men and because they did not otherwise fall prey to it like the men. Two free women did get sore throats, and they in the mildest fashion, but slave women suffered from it a great deal more and those who got it most violently also died quickest.³⁴

Why should slave women have suffered differently from free women? One answer is suggested by the text itself and it is connected to the ways in which Greek men treated their wives and daughters (but not their female slaves). Women were supposed to be kept indoors as much as possible, even if the question of how far this corresponded to reality is subject to some debate.³⁵ There seem to have been two exceptions: older women past childbearing age and slaves, the control of whose sexuality was a secondary matter compared to that of wives and daughters who produced the next generation of citizens. This was a difference then, not of bodily type, but of lifestyle.

I wholly agree with Nancy Demand, therefore, that ‘innate’ Aristotelian divisions between slave and free are essentially absent from the *Epidemics*.

There is, however, also no evidence to support her assertion (see above) that these texts nevertheless imply that an 'inferior barbarian environment' somehow harmed the body of the slave. There is, however, a final possible distinction between slave and free highlighted by Demand. The authors of the *Epidemics* may have believed the bodies of slaves were damaged or disabled in some way because of the 'hazardous conditions of their working lives': 'They attributed the inferiority of slaves not to innate differences in the body or mind, as did Aristotle, but to the same environmental factors and customary practices that shaped the lives of free men.'³⁶

Compare the views of the philosopher Xenophon as he explains a concept known to the Greeks as *banausia*, the contempt held for those who engaged in certain types of manual work:

Certainly, those skills that are called the *banausic* are infamous and naturally held totally in contempt in our cities. For they ruin utterly the bodies of those doing the work and those managing them, forcing them to be seated and stay in the shade, some to pass their days in front of the fire. And as their bodies become weak and womanish their minds also become very much weaker.³⁷

Xenophon is thinking here primarily of those free men who worked as artisans. Free men had at least some choice in their occupations. Slaves did not and would often have been given 'banausic' work. This might seem, therefore, to lend support to Demand's view, that 'the conditions of work and slave life in general made slaves especially susceptible to certain ailments, as is shown by the numerous cases of workers' injuries'.³⁸

There are indeed a number of cases, apart from the slave women we have just met suffering from the complications of a sore throat, where a person's occupation was mentioned in connection with an illness. For the sake of clarity I will subdivide these cases, highlighting those where the evidence allows us to identify the sufferers as slaves.

First, there are some cases where we can be fairly confident that the injury or problem was connected with labour. A groom was hurt when he was kicked by a horse.³⁹ A shoemaker stabbed himself and fell victim to what would appear to be tetanus.⁴⁰ The captain (or commander) of a ship had a finger crushed by an anchor.⁴¹ Perhaps rather more problematically, a man fell off a kiln.⁴² Those who worked with their hands (like the two individuals, including a *pais*, working with vines) could develop specific problems.⁴³ We are also told that long necks or heads might be caused by stooping over.⁴⁴

Secondly, there are cases which might have been the result of, or complicated by, labouring or working. For example, we find that some fullers had swellings in the groin and throat.⁴⁵ A *paidion* was hit by a mule.⁴⁶ A *pais* had problems, one symptom of which was being tired from labour.⁴⁷ A woman recovered from illness when she stopped suckling a child: she might be a wet nurse.⁴⁸ I am unsure where one might place the case of the man hit by a

cart,⁴⁹ the man 'who lifted up the wine',⁵⁰ the man who worked in the mountains whose thighs were withered,⁵¹ the gymnastic teacher (or anointer) at the house of Harpalides whose arms and legs grew weak⁵² or, more picturesquely, the water carrier who became a eunuch from running and hunting.⁵³ The salesman 'outside' who had inflammation of the lungs could be included at a stretch.⁵⁴

Finally, there were cases where an occupation was mentioned but where it is possibly or probably only mentioned for purposes of identification.⁵⁵ This is clearest when one reads of a patient who is the 'wife' of the carpenter, and so on.⁵⁶

What do these cases tell us? We must begin with another word of warning. The *Epidemics* are the only surviving Hippocratic texts which systematically discuss both the status of the patients and the cause of their illness. Their primary focus was, however, fever. We should therefore expect cases of trauma to be underrepresented. Nonetheless, the evidence there is does not seem to support Demand's position.

The majority of the slaves of whose status we can be reasonably confident (and discussed earlier) do not seem to be suffering from problems connected with their labour. Even if the groom struck by a horse was a slave, he is the exception, not the rule. We cannot tell whether the majority of those who suffered from what one might describe as 'work-related' illnesses were slaves or not. We cannot simply assume that they were.

There are several cases where 'workers' are seen to suffer from exactly the same problems as those with no connection to a trade.⁵⁷ In others, while an occupation is mentioned, the discussion suggests that this is not of primary interest to the author.⁵⁸ There is also no suggestion in these texts that those with such injuries or problems were treated any differently from other patients.

'Work' is also only one of a range of physical activities that created problems – so did war,⁵⁹ wrestling or exercise,⁶⁰ sex⁶¹ and horse-riding.⁶² These activities would have often involved the wealthier sections of Greek society. We should not be surprised that some Greeks and some of their slaves hurt themselves at work. Nor should we be surprised, as these texts suggest, that they could harm themselves at other times as well. It does not suggest that the writers of the *Epidemics* saw the sufferers of such accidents as 'un-dimensional beings'. Nor that, as Demand asserts, 'the doctors supported a common Greek view that physical labour was servile because it caused physical deformity'.

One needs to be very careful here. I am *not* suggesting that the authors of the *Epidemics* were saintly intellectual heroes who argued for a 'brotherhood of man'. They were almost certainly relatively well-to-do members of Greek society, as indeed the very fact that they have left literature behind for us to read suggests. As relatively well-to-do Greeks they would probably have looked down upon those who made and sold things for a living. One cannot

prove this directly from the texts, though it would be a surprise if it were not so. It may be significant that slaves and labourers are very often unnamed, unlike many other patients.⁶³ Showing a social bias against artisans is not the same, however, as proving that their bodies were seen as significantly different to those of other members of the community. Even less does it prove that the bodies of slaves were seen as 'uni-dimensional', purely determined by their labour. The authors of the *Epidemics* do *not* in fact seem to have regarded a person's job as particularly important in the development or treatment of disease.⁶⁴

There is therefore little suggestion that (like Aristotle) the authors of the *Epidemics* believed that a slave's body was of its essence any different from the body of the free. Demand rightly rejects such a reading of the *Epidemics*. In suggesting that the body of the slave was seen as somehow different from the body of the free because of the kind of work they did, there is, however, a danger of importing an equally misleading reading into these texts. Hippocratic medicine is in many ways the dog that did not bark in the night. The striking point is not the presence of socially determined somatic differences, it is their absence, contrary to what one might have expected. At least as regards the ideology of Hippocratic medicine, the male/female division was the most important, and the authors of the *Epidemics* had a number of ways of dividing up humanity (including young versus old)⁶⁵ of which slave/free seems only to have been a minor example.

One needs, once again, to be very careful as to what this conclusion actually implies. I am not arguing that the slave/free distinction was an unimportant one in Greek society. It most certainly was. I am not claiming that slave and free were equal. They most certainly were not. We must, however, be prepared to accept the limits of our evidence. We must be particularly careful about importing our own conceptions into what few ancient texts we have. Given the working conditions for many slaves in classical Greece and given the comparative lack of legal protection, life would have been very unpleasant indeed. Slaves would have been looked down upon (even if they had managed to achieve freedom).⁶⁶ The *Epidemics* suggest, however, that the kind of xenophobia seen in Aristotle and used to justify the institution of slavery, or the kind of class snobbery seen in the writings of Xenophon and used to justify contempt for labourers, may *not* have been shared by at least one significant section of the Greek intelligentsia. There were limits to the differences perceived between the body of the free and the body of the slave.

NOTES

I would like to thank the assistance given by all those who participated at the ICHOS conference in September 2000 and particularly to Professor Jane Gardner for the invaluable help given in editing this article.

1. For authoritative overviews of Greek slavery, see Y. Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); H. Klees, *Sklavenleben im klassischen Griechenland* (Stuttgart:

- Steiner, 1998). For a very short introduction see N.R.E. Fisher, *Slavery in Classical Greece* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2000). See also T. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1988) and *Slavery* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). On numbers, see Garland, *Slavery in Ancient Greece*, pp.55ff.
2. On the question of the use of slaves in agriculture, see most recently W. Ameling, 'Landwirtschaft und Sklaverei im klassischen Attika', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 266, 2 (1998), pp.281–315 and M. Jameson, 'Agricultural Labor in Ancient Greece', in B. Wells (ed.), *Agriculture in Ancient Greece* (Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Athen, 1992), pp. 135–46, with references to the earlier debate. For a (perhaps too positive) view of the lives of slaves in the mines, see S. Lauffer, *Die Bergwerkssklaven von Laureion* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979). On economic use generally, see also R. Osborne, 'The Economics and Politics of Slavery in Athens', in A. Powell (ed.), *The Greek World* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.27–43.
3. On the legal position of Greek slaves: S. Todd, *The Shape of Athenian Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 184–94; V. Hunter, *Policing Athens: Social Control in Attic Lawsuits, 420–320 BC* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 154–84.
4. It seems to have been something of a dictum that while the free person could pay (usually) for their crimes with their property, a slave should pay with their body (something of a legal necessity since there is no evidence to suggest that slaves in Athens, for example, were ever allowed to own property). See e.g. Demosthenes 22.55. In addition, slave testimony could only be given in court (for most types of cases) under torture. There is major disagreement as to how far this regulation was actually applied and how far it was a dead letter. See M. Gagarin 'The Torture of Slaves in Athenian Law', *Classical Philology*, 91 (1996), pp.1–18, arguing it was a legal fiction. For a very different view, see D.C. Mirhady 'Torture and Rhetoric in Athens', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 106 (1996), pp.119–31. Whatever the truth, the existence of the regulation expressed the ideological gulf between free and slave. See also P. duBois, *Torture and Truth* (London: Routledge, 1991).
5. See V. Ehrenberg, *The People of Aristophanes*, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1974), ch.6 for references. The problem, of course, is that violent slapstick is funny and not only directed against slaves. Free people are manhandled in the plays too. For further discussions of slavery in Greek tragedy, see J. Vogt, *Ancient Slavery and the Ideal of Man* translated by T. Wiedemann (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), ch.1; and H. Brandt, *Die Sklaven in den Rollen von Dienern und Vertrauten bei Euripides* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1973); with H. Kuch, *Kriegsgefangenschaft und Sklaverei bei Euripides* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1974).
6. Ps-Aristotle, *Oeconomica* 1.5 and Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, 13.9–10. When authors tell us to train our slaves rather than beat them into submission, should the historian be more concerned that such advice was needed or that such an ideal was at least current?
7. For a discussion of colour prejudice in the Greek world, see F. Snowden *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).
8. Again, the evidence is primarily impressionistic. In Athenian comedy, names suggesting an origin in Lydia or Paphlagonia (in Turkey) or Thrace (modern Bulgaria) seem to have been synonymous with slavery. Little archival material has survived from the classical period. What little material there is would appear to support the impressions gained from comedy. See, e.g., W.K. Pritchett, 'The Attic Stelai: Part I', *Hesperia*, 22 (1953), pp.225–99, at pp.242 and 252; 'The Attic Stelai: Part II', *Hesperia*, 25 (1956), pp. 178–317, esp. pp. 278 and 280–1; 'Five new fragments of the Attic Stelai', *Hesperia*, 30 (1961), pp.23–9 at p.27.
9. N. Himmelfmann, 'Archäologisches zum Problem der griechischen Sklaverei', *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz, Sozial- und Geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse, Wiesbaden*, 13 (1971), pp.49ff discusses the complexities of the identification of slavery in Greek art. See also W. Raeck, *Zum Barbarenbild in der Kunst Athens im 6. und 5. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Bonn: Habelt, 1981) on the depiction of certain types of foreigners.
10. E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-definition Through Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).
11. Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2.14 (1254b 28–31).
12. *Ibid.*, 7.6.1 (1327b 23–34).
13. *Ibid.*, 1.1.5 (1252b 8–9) for a statement that Greeks should rule over barbarians since the latter are equivalent to slaves. Compare also *Airs, Waters, Places*, 12ff. This text is ascribed to Hippocrates, though we have little sound reason to believe that he wrote it. Note that this writer also recognized some differences among the Greeks themselves.
14. For the debate, see P. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1996), especially pp. 107–27, with references to earlier literature.

15. N. Demand, 'Women and Slaves as Hippocratic Patients', in S. Joshel and S. Murnaghan (eds), *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp.69–84. For an earlier discussion of some of the issues she raises, see F. Kudlien, *Die Sklaven in der griechischen Medizin der klassischen und hellenistischen Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1968).
16. One should note that while the vast bulk of our evidence for slavery in this period comes from Athens, the Hippocratic texts are unusual in that they were apparently written in a number of different places across the Aegean world. The *Epidemics* concern cases in northern Greece.
17. For a very short introduction to these texts, see P. Potter, *Short Handbook of Hippocratic Medicine* (Québec, Éditions du Sphinx 1988). See also J. Jouanna, 'The Birth of Western Medical Art', in M. Grmek (ed.), *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1998), pp.22–71; G. Lloyd, 'The Transformations of Ancient Medicine', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 66, 1 (1996), pp. 114–32; V. Nutton, 'Healers in the Market Place: Towards a Social History of Graeco-Roman Medicine', in A. Wear (ed.), *Medicine in Society: Historical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 15–59.
18. See also N. Demand *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); L. Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); H. King, *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998).
19. Demand, 'Women and Slaves', p.83.
20. Demand, 'Women and Slaves', p.81. Please note that all further references are to the *Epidemics* unless otherwise specified. For accessible modern translations of these texts, see W.H.S. Jones, *Hippocrates Volume 1* (London: Heinemann, 1923), pp. 138–287 and W.D. Smith, *Hippocrates Volume 7* (London: Heinemann, 1994).
21. See, M. Golden, 'Pais, Child and Slave', *Antiquité Classique*, 65 (1985), pp.91–104 and Demand 'Women and Slaves', p81.
22. *Epidemics* 1.17, 2.1.12 (a *nautopaidion* – a ship's boy or slave), 2.3.18, 4.11 (though the designation that he was 'from the house of' Metrophantus is unusual), 4.19, 4.20 (the boy 'near' or 'by' the furthest shop, again unusual), 4.27, 5.35, 5.39, 5.51, 5.97, 7.35 (including a *paidiskos*), 7.117. All of these passages mention *pais*.
23. 4.27 (a *pais* of Apemantus' sister who was 'wearied by labour'), 4.50 (a *pais* who is twisting vine branches). At 4.52 the female *pais*, who may be the woman mentioned in 4.51, is described as 'in the house of Myris', which suggests that she is a slave. A daughter would more probably have been described as the '*pais* of Myris'.
24. 1.15 (the *pais* of both Erato and Myllus), 7.105 (a *paidiske*). This latter example could mean either young girl or slave, but she has a child who is described as a *meirakion* ('youth') lending weight to the assumption that *paidiske* here describes status rather than age. Her son is himself described as *pais* in the same passage. He almost certainly was a slave, but *pais* here need not mean more than 'child' or 'son'.
25. 1.10 (*paidia* is used with children discussed as a group: the accumulation of age specifiers makes the translation virtually certain), 1.12 (*paidia*, coming just before the discussion of women and then older people), 1.22 (*paidia*, coming just before the 'older'), 2.2.19 (a woman gives birth to a *paidion*), 3.8 (*paidia*, noting that those before their prime were most affected), 4.49 (a *paidiske*: one could, with Demand, 'Women and Slaves', p.81, translate this as 'slave', but the order of the passage makes more sense if we are being told that she died young: it would certainly have been less redundant to say that she was the *paidiske* of Histiaeus at the start of the passage if 'servant' had been meant), 7.106 (a *pais* who is two months old: of course he *could* be a two-month-old slave), 7.124 (a *pais* who is an *ephebe*, someone who has arrived at puberty. It would perhaps be a little odd, though not impossible, to use the term *ephebe* of a slave, given its connotations of citizen military service).
26. E.g. 1.10 and 1.12.
27. For examples of individuals or groups designated by *pai-* words being directly compared to named individuals who were most probably free, see 1.15, 1.17, 7.61, 7.105 and (possibly) 4.33.
28. *Oiketis*: 2.4.5 (a problem with childbirth), 4.9, 4.32, 4.33 (with symptoms like the woman/wife of Hipponax), 4.38, 5.19, 7.112 (with a condition compared in some respects to Polyphantus's); *oiketes*: 1.15 (where the servant is singled out as having developed the disease differently from others, though nothing in the text suggests that was because of their status or occupation); *oikouros*: 6.8.10; *therapaina*: 1.21 (her condition is compared to that of Cratistonax), 5.85, repeated in 7.90 (in the midst of a series of other psychological problems involving named individuals); *therapon*: 4.13, 5.87

- (with 7.91); *amphipolis*: 5.25 (who had had severe pain during sex when young).
29. 4.2 (a branded man), 4.20e (the man from Leocydes with a problem similar to Moschus's). The young groom of 5.16 could, but conceivably need not be, a slave (compare Demand, 'Women and Slaves', p.82).
 30. 5.41.
 31. 5.35.
 32. Though it is perhaps no more significant than the fact that the previous patient was a young man from Euboea (in Greece).
 33. Foreigners can be mentioned (e.g. 4.17), as can the 'dark-skinned' or 'swarthy' or 'sunburnt', (6.2.19), but there is nothing to suggest that this is anything more than a descriptive term. It does not appear to have a medical significance.
 34. 6.7.1.
 35. S. Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (London: British Museum Press, 1998), pp.35–9, with references to the earlier debate.
 36. Demand, 'Women and Slaves', p.77
 37. Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 4.2. We should not simply assume that all members of Greek society shared such a view. On the position of artisans in Greek society, see A. Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974) and R.J. Hopper, *Trade and Industry in Classical Greece* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979). Those who worked the land formed a special case. They could be included under the 'banausic' occupations, but were often not. Whether one worked for oneself or for someone else was often crucial.
 38. Demand, *Women and Slaves*, pp.81–82.
 39. 5.16. Smith, *Hippocrates*, p.167 translates 'Hippokomos' as a name. This is possible, but 'groom' is surely a preferable translation given the context.
 40. 5.45.
 41. 7.36.
 42. 4.20f. Compare 5.32 for a man falling on an anchor.
 43. 4.50 for the *pais* (note that he is compared to the son of Amynteus. While 'man of Amynteus' is a possible translation of the phrase used, son is more likely). For the other worker, see 6.3.8. Compare 6.7.1 where, after certain types of fevers and illnesses, those who work with their hands are affected in them only. Demand, 'Women and Slaves', p.80 cites also 6.4.4. I would give a slightly different translation (it seems to be a case involving the wife or *possibly* 'woman' of Agasis). She had pains especially when she worked with her (right) hand, though this was only one part of a much larger problem that had begun after she had given birth.
 44. 2.1.8. This is embedded in a passage which suggests a whole range of other physical differences which would not appear to have anything to do with labour.
 45. 5.59 (with 7.81).
 46. 5.39.
 47. 6.4.27. The writer immediately asks the question whether, in the case of those who are tired, the crisis (the point at which the disease reveals itself and exits the body) comes in the eye or the joints. The disease is not necessarily caused by the work.
 48. 2.2.16, cf. 4.10, involving the wife (possibly 'woman') of Thersander.
 49. 5.26.
 50. 4.25.
 51. 6.3.9 (though the text is problematical). I do not include two passages listed by Demand, 'Women and Slaves', p.82: 6.1.9 and 6.6.4, both involving problems brought on with fatigue from walking or taking a trip. They are, as she notes, both connected to fatigue, but I am less certain whether we really can connect them with 'overwork'.
 52. 7.9.
 53. 7.122. This is very obscure. Note that the section ends with the suggestion that sexual activity cures dysentery.
 54. 7.13
 55. 2.1.12 for *nautopaidion* ('ship's boy' or 'slave'), 4.2 (a rope- or mat-maker), 4.20c (the stone-cutter Acanthus suffering from scabs and blisters), 4.20d (a 'seller' with same problem as Pythodorus's wife), 4.20e (a shoemaker with the same problem as Moschus and one of Leocydes's men), 4.23 (Zoilus the carpenter), 4.25 (the man from the mines or quarries), and the vinedresser who has the same problem as Timenes' sister), 4.29 (a carpenter with problems similar to those of Apemantus and

- Nicostratus), 4.36 (a fuller), 4.37 (the teacher Lycinus), 7.55 (Cleotimus' shoemaker), 7.71, also 5.52 (a butcher in Acanthus), 7.79 (a fuller on Syros in a case similar to that of Nicoxenus in Olynthos, 7.80).
56. E. g. 2.2.17. Cf. 4.31, 5.1.
 57. See the discussion of individual cases above.
 58. 2.1.8, 4.20f, 4.27, 4.50, 6.7.1. Note that while 5.32 may discuss the case of the man who falls on an anchor, 5.33 discusses a woman who cut her own throat. 'Industrial injuries' can look more significant out of context than in context.
 59. 5.21, 5.46–7, 5.55, 5.60 (7.32), 5.61 (7.33), 5.62 (7.31), 5.95 (7.121), 5.96 (7.34), 5.98 (7.29), 5.99 (7.30).
 60. 5.14, 6.8.30, 7.47.
 61. 3 case series 2.10 and 3 case series 2.16 (allied to drunkenness), 6.3.5 (wind caused by sex).
 62. 4.50, 6.7.1.
 63. For some exceptions, see 1.21, 2.2.9, 4.23.
 64. Demand, 'Women and Slaves', p.77 does seem to suggest that some forms of treatment may have effectively discriminated against slaves: 'Another variable factor was the frequency of the use of purges. It was assumed everyone would use purges in some form and on some schedule for the sake of their health (Hippocrates, *Regimen in Health* 5), but slaves may have been less able to attend individually to such hygienic regimes, being subjected to mass purges that would be quickly effective.' While I accept this as a possibility, it is difficult to support it from the surviving texts. I would support Demand's more general point (p.78): 'There is no suggestion that the slaves were given different medical treatment or that the doctor was less concerned with them.'
 65. See 1.1 (women/young/those who wrestle), 1.12 (women/old/*paidia*), 1.19 (a list of all sorts of differences, including age and sex), 3.14 (the young), 6.1.4 (the young), 6.5.3 (some diseases leave us in old age), 6.8.11 (young/old). For some specific cases involving such divisions, see 4.42, 4.55, 6.7.1, 7.8, 7.105. For some rather more esoteric ways of dividing patients, see 2.1.8, 2.6.1, 6.1.2, 6.2.6 (including pointy-headed people).
 66. See D. Whitehead, *The Ideology of the Athenian Metic* (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1977), and 'The Ideology of the Athenian Metic: Some Pendants and a Reappraisal', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 32 (1986), pp. 145–58.

Slave Disguise in Ancient Rome

MICHELE GEORGE

Introduction: Slave Disguise in Roman History

Among the anecdotes about Julius Caesar is the story of his nocturnal trip, disguised as a slave, across the Adriatic to investigate the reasons why expected reinforcements from Italy had not yet reached Macedonia.¹ The sea growing rough, the captain wanted to turn back; but Caesar removed his disguise and urged him forward, saying, according to Plutarch, 'Be brave, for you have Caesar and Caesar's fortune in your boat'. The story is generally cited by ancient authors as an example of Caesar's audacity or his good luck, but it is the casual reference to slave disguise, and the seeming ease with which Caesar achieves it, that is relevant to this discussion.

The story of Caesar is not unique, for the ruse of slave disguise appears in stories of other luminaries who, although presumably easily recognized, could apparently assume the look of a slave at will. A similar episode is told of Mark Antony, who purportedly used slave disguise to avoid an angry mob after the assassination of Caesar; and of Sulpicia, wife of the aristocrat Lentulus, who during the proscriptions of 43 BC escaped to Sicily disguised as a maid.² The trick could apparently be used for darker purposes: compare the historian Tacitus's report that the emperor Nero, dressed as a slave, customarily wandered unrecognized through the bars and brothels of Rome with a band of accomplices, thieving from shops and roughing up anyone unfortunate enough to get in his way. Nero's disguise was apparently so plausible that on several occasions he was wounded in the scuffles and even received a permanent scar on his cheek.³ In an inversion of the theme are stories of reverse disguise, wherein slaves dress as their masters to help them out of difficult or dangerous situations. Recounted as examples of exceptional servile selfsacrifice, most of these stories are set during the chaotic time of the proscriptions, when Roman aristocrats of the wrong political faction were hunted down and killed. The senator Urbinus Panapio, for example, was betrayed while he was in hiding at his country estate, but he was saved by a loyal slave, who voluntarily put on his master's clothing and ring, lay down on his bed, was mistaken for his master, and was killed in his place. Once social order was restored, the grateful master erected a monument to his deceased slave recording the tale of his loyalty.⁴

Whatever their historicity (and I would not argue that all these incidents necessarily occurred), stories of slave disguise and its reverse illuminate the

highly symbolic and hierarchical character of Roman dress, and the profound assumptions about status which might be based on clothing alone. They rely on the premise that, if a man dressed like a slave, he must be a slave, and, conversely, if he dressed like a senator, he must be a senator. But what did it mean to dress like a senator and what did it mean to dress like a slave? More particularly, what did it mean to disguise oneself as a slave, and how might a slave be identified on the streets of ancient Rome? The principle that 'clothes make the man' (or woman) articulates succinctly the crucial role of clothing in the construction and maintenance of social status and identity, in particular elite identity, at Rome. Stories of slave disguise, however, suggest that one could not always judge a book by its cover.

Clothing and Elite Status

Long acknowledged as an essential element in self-representation, the clothing an elite Roman man or woman wore in public could convey important biographical information about status, age, gender, morality and political achievements.⁵ Treatises were written on dress and style, and Seneca and Juvenal frequently use clothing as sign and symbol of character and morality. Put simply, in Rome appearances counted. Furthermore, forms of clothing that were restricted by law to certain status groups reinforced the social order and strengthened the status quo. There was the *stola*, the slip-like dress worn by the married woman (*matrona*), which was restricted by law to the wives of freeborn men until the second century BC, when the right to wear it was extended to freedwomen with freeborn husbands.⁶ Used as a metaphor for matronly chastity in Roman literature, the *stola* also appears as an honorific in funerary commemoration in various permutations, among them the formulae *matrona stolata* or *femina stolata*, 'a stola'd woman'.⁷ The *bullā*, a circular amulet worn around the necks of young boys, was a status marker permitted only to the sons of freeborn men until the second century BC, when it was permitted to the sons of freedmen provided their mother was freeborn.⁸ Best known of all is the toga, a garment which demonstrated publicly aspects of social rank and civic involvement, and which took various forms, for use on particular occasions or denoting age or status. The significance of the toga went beyond mere conventions of dress, however, for its most important symbolic aspect was as a mark of Roman citizenship, since by law non-citizens were not allowed to wear togas of any kind.⁹

The regulation of clothing on the basis of status granted the elite a conspicuous and easily recognizable way to display aspects of their identity in public, and the assertion of identity through specific forms of attire was also therefore an assertion of power. However, refinements in dress were the prerogative of the elite and were apparently of far less concern to the lower ranks. To an 'average' Roman, of free birth but no great wealth, the symbolic import of the toga as a badge of citizenship took second place behind more pragmatic matters, such as its weight and the difficulty of keeping it clean, and

already in the late Republic the toga was no longer the garment of choice for everyday wear. Outside formal occasions, the toga was not normally worn, at any level of society; a tunic was preferred.

Slave Clothing

While a good deal is known about elite dress, far less is known about slave dress, and although stories of disguise in Roman history seem to suggest the existence of garments which could be readily identified as servile, none provides a description of precisely how the look of a slave was achieved. In the highly status-conscious culture of Rome, slaves as a group were at the very bottom of the social pyramid, with no rights, no personhood, no acknowledged past and no control over their own futures. Yet, for the single most important status distinction of all in Roman society, there was no visible marker in clothing, for there was no official slave garment. Ascertaining what real slaves wore is difficult since references to slave clothing in Roman texts are relatively rare and those that do exist are frustratingly vague, while Roman art, despite a strong preference for narrative and documentary content, offers up a very limited slave iconography. If they are depicted at all, slaves appear as background figures, subsidiary to the main action, and shown not for themselves, but as foils to their owner's power and as symbols of their owner's wealth.¹⁰

As with all other aspects of slave life, a slave's clothing depended upon the wealth of the master and the nature of the slave's tasks, resulting in a wide range of possible slave attire. The tunic, short for men and longer for women, was the most common utilitarian piece of clothing for slaves as it was for the freeborn, and it presumably varied in the quality of fabric and manufacture. Scenes of work from commercial establishments at Pompeii, where free and slave worked side by side, suggest that slaves who worked in manual labour dressed like other labourers; the status of the workers is indeterminate, and in neither the visual evidence nor the textual descriptions are there reliable criteria to distinguish between them.¹¹ The elder Cato, in his treatise on farming, *De Agricultura*, recommended providing basic clothing for farm workers every alternate year, and lists the essentials: a tunic, a blanket which doubled as a cloak, and sturdy wooden shoes.¹² Domestic slaves too, while they commonly wore tunics, might also sometimes wear more elaborate garments. The imaginary nouveau riche freedman Trimalchio is satirized, in the time of Nero, by the writer Petronius for dressing his slaves in gaudy colours, with even fancy dress at banquets.¹³ As property, slaves were in themselves a status marker, a kind of luxury good put on exhibition along with expensive objets d'art and lavish domestic decoration. Their finery was therefore a reflection of the master's status, rather than their own servile status, and could be changed, Cinderella-fashion, at the master's whim.

Although the absence of visible status markers for slaves might at first appear to undermine the relationship between clothing, status and identity,

there was a compelling reason not to single out slaves by their attire. Seneca famously refers to a senate debate over the imposition of a slave uniform, a motion that was ultimately defeated for fear that rebellion would erupt once the numeric strength of slaves among the population was made clear.¹⁴ Exceptionally in the case of slaves, social control took precedence over status distinctions in dress, and slaves could not therefore always be identified in the streets of Rome by what they wore. The senate debate reveals the conflicting interests of the Roman elite: on one hand, a deeply ingrained and long-standing impulse to delineate the social order in an unambiguous and highly visible way; on the other, the legitimate fear of slave uprisings and the absolute necessity of discouraging a collective slave identity. Ironically, by not dictating slave dress the slave-owning class exerted control on a more meaningful level, for slaves were denied not only an individual identity but also a sense of belonging to their own social group and the legitimacy that accompanies such a group identification, even among the socially disempowered. At a glance, broad differences in economic status were no doubt obvious in the streets of Rome, but the blurring of clearly visible distinctions between free and slave kept Roman slaves a fragmented lot, isolated from one another, and ensured that the identification of slaves as such was contained – and therefore controlled – within individual households, under the power of each master, who ruled his household like miniature republic.¹⁵

The senate's decision to eschew a slave uniform, thereby keeping slaves unidentifiable to one another, had the disconcerting consequence of keeping them unidentifiable to everyone else as well. Appian (a historian of the second century AD) comments that in 44 BC, with the exception of senators, free men wore the same sort of clothing as slaves, reflecting the preference for the tunic rather than the toga even for public wear.¹⁶ The result was a dangerous ambiguity in visible signs of status among the majority of the Roman population which obscured who was free and who was a slave, and which threatened the social fabric itself. Stories of slave disguise were predicated on the real possibility that, despite the protection of a status-based dress code, in certain circumstances slave might not be distinguishable from slave owner. Playing upon elite anxieties about the presence of foreign slaves in their midst, these stories drew their dramatic power from the tension between the elite's confidence in readily identifiable status differences and their awareness that in reality this did not always hold true.

The Body of the Slave

There was more to looking like a slave than dress, however, for paralleling the semiotics of clothing was an aesthetic scale based on status, a notional opposition between the bodies of the free and of the slave which reflected the relative value of *ingenuus* and *servus* in Roman society. Deriving from the theory of natural slavery and resting on the belief that differences in social status were manifested in the physical body, this dimension in elite attitudes

towards slave appearance heightened the suspense in stories of slave disguise: if clothing did not give Caesar away, some other aspect of his appearance or behaviour might.¹⁷ To this way of thinking slaves were seen as unattractive by nature, swarthy, ill-proportioned and bestial in demeanour, characteristics which were in turn used to demonstrate their moral weakness and general inferiority.

There were several aspects to this idea of physical difference. As the 'articulate tools' (*instrumenti genus vocale*) of the Roman villa, slaves were classified with livestock by Roman agricultural writers, who framed in those terms the details of their maintenance.¹⁸ Slaves were regarded as not worthy of humane treatment and could justifiably be forced to work beyond reasonable limits of physical endurance. Moreover, equating slaves with animals and reducing them to a sub-human level was a strategy for regulating their behaviour more easily, for in rejecting their humanity the slave owner diminished the chance of rebellion. To 'animalize' the slave 'was to project ugliness, always a mark of inferiority, onto a human victim for whom a condition of subservience others had determined'.¹⁹ The novel *The Golden Ass*, or *Metamorphoses*, by Apuleius offers a powerful and suggestive illustration of human subjugation using the fictional transformation of a human being, Lucius, into an animal. The novel follows the well-bred youth's dramatic corporeal change, his subsequent adventures as a beast of burden, and his efforts to regain his human form. Enduring the daily humiliations of the lowliest and most reviled barnyard animal, he experiences all the degradations of slavery: beatings, overwork, hunger, thirst, the loss of his autonomy and of his humanity. The transformation represents the most extreme form of status reversal possible in the Roman imagination, and his newly contemptible condition as a servile beast is matched by the ugliness of his altered form.²⁰

Attitudes towards slaves in Roman thought were framed within a world view that had Rome at its centre, resulting in a general suspicion of all non-Italians which included slaves, most of whom came from somewhere else in the empire. Vitruvius and Pliny the Elder, among others, relate this geographical theory of racial difference, detailing how the climatic extremes of cold and heat resulted in widely diverse appearance, behaviour and moral character. At one end of this regional spectrum were northerners, who were extraordinarily tall and pale, courageous in war, but intellectual dullards; at the other end were Ethiopians, curly-haired, too short and dark, possessing a sharp intelligence which was undercut by their cowardice. Only Italy, positioned in the centre and with a favourably moderate climate, could produce an appropriate mix of physical beauty, mental acuity and moral character.²¹ Anyone who fell outside Italian aesthetic parameters, barbarians and slaves alike, was by nature both less attractive and morally inferior. Slave dealers had ways to indicate the foreign origins of slaves to a xenophobic public wary of hidden flaws: chalk was put on the feet of slaves imported from the provinces, garlands on slaves who were captives of war, and caps on the

heads of slaves offered for sale with no guarantee that they were free of physical handicaps or moral defects.²²

The single extended description of slave disguise occurs in Petronius's *Satyricon*, a literary rather than an historical source, and involves camouflaging the body itself rather than concealing it in clothing. The passage is revealing of Roman notions of slave appearance in a way that the historical anecdotes are not. The two heroes of the picaresque tale, Giton and Encolpius, try to escape from a ship disguised as slaves. Their first plan, to dye their entire bodies black with ink and masquerade as Ethiopian slaves, is eventually dismissed as too superficial to be plausible. Giton's sarcastic reaction to the idea comprises a list of physical features which might pass as servile, but which could not be achieved with mere ink:

'Oh! yes,' said Giton, 'and please circumcise us too so that we look like Jews, and bore our ears to imitate Arabians, and chalk our faces till Gaul takes us for her own sons; as if this colour alone could alter our shapes.... Suppose the stain of dye on the face could last for some time; tell me, can we also make our lips swell to a hideous thickness? Or transform our hair with curling-tongs? Or plough up our foreheads with scars? Or walk bow-legged? Or bend our ankles over to the ground? Or trim our beards in a foreign cut? Artificial colours dirty one's body without altering it.'²³

Giton's comments focus on visible ethnic features, but the portrait he paints goes beyond race to portray slaves as generically ugly, misshapen, and above all foreign. Implicit in his scepticism is the view that assuming the appearance of a slave was difficult simply because slaves were by definition different from Romans in fundamental physical ways, regardless of their geographic origins.

To some degree, this prejudice was borne out, for in many ways slaves might well have looked physically different from, and inferior to, their masters. The bodies of slaves often bore signs which might reveal their low status, such as scars from physical punishments or, more visible and more brutal, facial marks from branding and tattooing, which were common punishments for recalcitrant or fugitive slaves.²⁴ Untreated disease or injuries, a lack of proper nutrition, and the heavy physical work many slaves were compelled to do had further potential consequences for their appearance, and often resulted in bowed legs, poor posture, an awkward gait or stunted growth.²⁵

The diverse nature of the Roman slave population, which was not limited to any one race but encompassed a plethora of ethnicities and cultures, therefore rendered meaningless monolithic or prescriptive ideas about slave appearance. A floating set of standards was applied to slaves, a movable bar which was used against slaves in different ways. Aspects of appearance which were forced on slaves by their masters could be turned against them and used as signs of their innate servile weakness. Domestic slaves, males in particular, who were often compelled to assume a highly contrived effeminate look through ornate hairstyles and colourful clothing, were included in satirists' criticism of owners

who indulged in ostentatious extravagance (*luxuria*). Simplicity in dress and grooming, something specially approved of both in free men and their slaves as indicative of the owners' moral rectitude, were, it is suggested, especially characteristic of *vernae*, 'home-born' slaves, born to female slaves in the household and reared from birth amid Roman values.²⁶

Even beauty was a mixed blessing for a slave. More highly valued in general than unattractive slaves, beautiful slaves were less likely to end up working on a farm or in a mine and were more likely to become part of a domestic household, thus increasing their chances of manumission; yet their beauty also increased the likelihood of sexual exploitation at their master's hands. A master's complete control over the body of a slave meant that he could manipulate it as he liked, even to the point of denying nature, and until it was outlawed by the emperor Domitian castration was used by slave-dealers and owners to inhibit maturation in males and so maintain an adolescent appearance.²⁷ On the other hand, even a slave's ugliness could be used to his master's advantage, for there was a belief that anything unpleasant or strange looking (*atopos*) had apotropaic power and would therefore distract and fend off the evil eye, ensuring good luck for the household; this is why, according to Plutarch, amulets took the shape of grotesques. Such beliefs led to a fashion among Roman elites for keeping dwarves as pets, to provide comic relief and to bring good luck.²⁸

The prejudice went beyond physical appearance, for on a more fundamental and more subtle level it held that innate differences between slave and free were disclosed by small, tell-tale signs such as posture and carriage, clues to status which were not as easily hidden as the body itself. Vigilance was required by the public speaker, for example, who had to be wary lest he compromise his credibility with a careless gesture which struck his audience as servile or effeminate.²⁹ On their own, the subtle effects of elite breeding and life experience emerged in forms of behaviour which were beyond conscious control, revealing a man's character and background in his mien and manner.³⁰ Within this mentality, it was the details – a gesture, a movement of the head, a way of walking, a tone of voice – which revealed the ineffable yet palpable quality that separated freeborn from slave and which would, in the end, always come out.³¹

This faith in perceptible, inborn differences in appearance and in an equation between beauty and free status had as its fundamental flaw the reality that slaves were often beautiful and the freeborn less so, thereby weakening the presumed advantage of *ingenuus* status. The two contradictory assumptions are neatly apparent in Plutarch's account of the 'festival of the handmaidens'. When invading Gauls captured Rome in the early fourth century and demanded that the Romans hand over some of their women, to play the role of Roman matrons the Romans chose those among their female slaves who were 'the most beautiful and free-looking in appearance' – slave women who, despite their servile status, were able when appropriately dressed

to pass as elite.³² Similarly, Quintilian records the story of the ugly lawyer Sulpicius Longus who, in a dispute over free status, said of the defendant (whom he was opposing) that even his face was the face of a slave; to which the judge jokingly replied: 'Is it your profound conviction, Longus, that an ugly man must be a slave?'³³ Longus could rely on the aesthetic prejudices of his audience to use the man's appearance against him; the judge however could point to Longus himself as proof that such prejudices were often insupportable.³⁴

So too the epigrammatist Martial, who joked that although he preferred a freeborn woman first, a freedwoman second and an *ancilla* or slave girl last, if the *ancilla* is the prettiest, she will be an *ingenua* to him, and he will overlook her slave status.³⁵ In making light of status-based assumptions about appearance, Martial and the unnamed judge acknowledge their patent absurdity without ever questioning their validity or suggesting their abolition. Martial's joke highlights another reality of Roman life which complicated schematic, status-based standards of beauty: that is manumission. Slaves could be and were indeed freed, thus confounding the idea of an innate aesthetic polarity, for a change in legal status did not obviously alter one's physiognomy.

Notwithstanding overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the presumption of visible superiority on the basis of status was a persistent feature of Roman attitudes towards slaves, a deeply held elite fiction that justified, and thereby eased, their subjugation. Credence in this fallacy drew on the same set of mental and moral gymnastics that were required to accept the other contradictory and logically inconsistent principles by which the institution of slavery was perpetuated. Few bore rational examination and only rarely were they subjected to it.³⁶

Disguise and Slavery

Related in brief and sketchy terms and sometimes with conflicting details, stories of slave disguise occupy a minor and relatively insignificant place in Roman history and historiography, and even their historical accuracy might be thought doubtful.³⁷ Yet there is enough meat on the bone to suggest that real events of this kind did occur, however infrequently, even if individual cases cannot be verified, and moreover that a Roman readership would accept such episodes as reasonably credible. From the lack of specifics on slave dress in these anecdotes, it can be assumed that there was some contemporary understanding of what was meant by the ill-defined phrase 'slave clothes' (*vestis servilis*) which the modern reader unfortunately does not share, a common conception which required no details but which was recognizable and believable to a Roman audience. A praetorian edict dating from the Republic made 'attempts upon chastity' (what nowadays might be called sexual harassment) an offence, though one with different degrees of seriousness: 'If someone accosts respectable young girls (*virgines*), even though they are in slaves' clothing (*ancillari veste vestitas*), he is understood to commit a lesser

offence: a much less offence, if the women were dressed as prostitutes (*meretricia veste feminae*) and not as respectable women (*matrum familiarum vestitae*).³⁸ Two sets of contrasting costume are proposed here, one between a respectable girl and a slave girl, and the other between a respectable matron and a prostitute. For the latter, the visible difference between the two kinds of apparel is considerable, and Roman men were clearly expected to distinguish at once the *matrona* from the prostitute; for their part, respectable Roman women were expected to dress accordingly, or risk their public safety. For the former, however, there is a greater degree of ambiguity. It is implied that, although a Roman man should be able to discern the slave girl from the respectable girl, in some cases he might be wrong, and that acting on such an assumption was not without risk. Furthermore, while here too there is a clear indication of commonly held expectations about dress and status, it is equally clear that such expectations were not always reliable; in fact, part of the purpose of the notation is to establish degrees of liability if confusion in status is claimed as a defence.

It seems probable that no details are given about the nature of slave dress in legal or historical texts because it was thought unnecessary for a Roman audience. In prosaic terms, slave disguise could have comprised any garment except the toga, but it is probable that some commonly worn piece of clothing is implied, such as the tunic, cloak or other generic item which slaves wore, presumably of inferior quality. Since clothing itself could not be trusted, the success of the disguise depended heavily on context, and on expected behaviours which were related to social status. After all, whatever the potential ambiguity in dress, a slave girl was in fact more likely than a freeborn girl to perform certain tasks, thus providing another element which could be used in ascertaining her status. And who would expect to meet the emperor in a brothel or back alley? In such unsavoury company, Nero's disguise would hold, at least temporarily; Caesar's was more successful.³⁹

The relative unconcern about the mechanics of the disguise suggests that the main aim in these narratives was the concealment of elite appearance, rather than the imitation of servile appearance, and that suitable clothing was the easiest and quickest way to achieve it.

Appropriate dress was so critical to elite identity and was so closely tied to notions of decorum and honourable behaviour that without it even the emperor himself could hide among the masses, while with it even a lowly but loyal slave could assume his master's identity and be killed in his master's place. The value of the disguise therefore hinged as much if not more on what was missing in his apparel, on the absence of the standard elements of elite dress, than on the details of the disguise itself. This is borne out by versions of the Caesar and Nero stories which fail to describe the disguise as servile, but emphasize instead its non-elite character, so that Caesar escapes in the clothes of a 'private man', or simply covers his head, while for his midnight rambles Nero seizes upon a wig or a hat.⁴⁰ What is most germane to the plot is the

obscuring of elite identity, and slave disguise is only one way to achieve that goal.

But in the absence of a canonical slave garment, the characterization of the disguise as servile suggests another level of interpretation, one that goes beyond the practical question of garment types to the issue of slave identity, and what that meant in a Roman context. In generic terms the slave's lack of status placed them at the opposite end of the social spectrum to men of Caesar and Nero's ilk. Numerous and indistinct, as a group slaves were the least identifiable and the least noticed among the Roman population; possessing no identity of their own separate from their master, they had no public 'self' of their own to assert through clothing. Although individual slaves could (and did) have a high public profile and even hold powerful positions within the imperial household,⁴¹ the label of 'slave' signified social powerlessness and social invisibility. It is precisely this anonymity that famous Romans sought in these dramatic tales, a temporary denial of their public prominence. Ironically, in stories of slave disguise this social invisibility, one of the oppressions of the servile condition, is turned to the advantage of the slave owner, and becomes a form of freedom for him, a way to avoid the burdens of his real social status; in effect, momentarily to flee the toga and its responsibilities. So Caesar boarded the boat dressed as a slave, 'threw himself down as one of no account, and kept quiet', relying on the assumption of others that someone of his real station in life would neither dress that way nor behave so modestly. Nero, a lover of all things theatrical who performed onstage and off, could adopt the role of a slave as he chose, and use the marginality of slave identity to escape the demands of power, its obligations and expectations.⁴²

Such disguises, either of masters as slaves or slaves as (generally elite) masters, whether exceptionally in times of crisis, such as the civil wars, to aid the master's escape, or merely for some private purpose, are always to the benefit of the masters. Whether slaves running away from servitude, as could and did happen, used disguise initially to aid their escape, is not recorded. Given the lack of distinction between the working dress of slaves and free men, disguise was less necessary. All represent exceptions to the normal course of events, times of social disruption when the established rules of order were temporarily suspended. Presumably it was only against the backdrop of broader social disarray that masters could be mistaken for slaves, or slaves mistaken for their masters; so profoundly transgressive a deceit could not be attempted or sustained under normal circumstances, when social order was intact. To believe otherwise was to acknowledge the humanity of the slave and the essential injustice of slavery itself.

Conclusion

Stories of slave disguise represent the use of clothing as the principal medium of disguise, and thus highlight the role of clothing to denote status in Roman society. In addition, social prejudices about what was considered to be typical

slave appearance, even if not always in accord with reality, reinforced the marginality of the slave. They also assisted in preventing the formation of a coherent slave identity, except one of subservience, worthlessness and fundamental rightlessness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this article are taken from the Loeb series. Versions of the Caesar story: Valerius Maximus, 9.8.2; Plutarch, *Caesar* 38, *Moralia* 319B–C; versions of the story which do not specify slave disguise: Dio Cassius, 41.46.2–4 ('in disguise'); Lucan, *Bellum Civile* 5.497–677 and Appian, *Bellum Civile* 2.56–58 refer to the disguise of a 'private man'; Suetonius, *Caesar* 58.2 'with head muffled up' (*obvoluto capite*).
2. Plutarch, *Antony* 14.1; Sulpicia: Appian, *Bellum Civile* 4.39; Valerius Maximus, 6.7.3.
3. Tacitus, *Annales* 13.25 is the only source to mention slave disguise; Dio Cassius, 61.9 refers to the donning of 'various costumes and different wigs', similar to Suetonius ('he put on a hat or wig', *Nero* 26). Dio (62.9) includes a runaway slave in a list of Nero's theatrical roles.
4. Dio Cassius, 47.10.2–4; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.2.16; Valerius Maximus, 6.8.6; Appian, *Bellum Civile* 4.44 (named as Appius, but story the same as Panapio); Seneca, *De Beneficiis* 3.25 (not named as Panapio but narrative details are the same). Slaves also reportedly accompanied their masters dressed as state bodyguards (*lictiores*) or as soldiers in other escape efforts (Appian, *Bellum Civile* 4.45; 4.46).
5. L. Bonfante and J.L. Sebesta (eds), *The World of Roman Costume* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).
6. Festus, 112.26 L; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.6.13–14. For the *stola* and other forms of female costume, see J.L. Sebesta, 'Symbolism in the Costume of the Roman Woman', in Bonfante and Sebesta, *The World of Roman Costume*, pp.46–53; for the *stola* in honorific sculpture: B.I. Scholz, *Untersuchungen zur Tracht der römischen Matrona* (Cologne: Böhlaus, 1992).
7. B. Holtheide, 'Matrona stolata – Femina Stolata', *ZPE* 38 (1980) pp. 127–34.
8. H.R. Goette, 'Die Bulla' *BJ* 186 (1986) 133–164.
9. Toga: H.R. Goette, *Studien zu römischen Togadarstellungen* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1989); S. Stone, 'The Toga: From National to Ceremonial Costume', in Bonfante and Sebesta, *The World of Roman Costume* pp. 13–45. Freed slaves had the right to wear the toga.
10. Slave clothing in written sources: see K.R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) pp. 87–9, 95–9; slaves in banquet scenes from Roman wall painting, e.g., J.R. Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998) figs. 29, 30, 32, 33, 34; pl. 6. Among the very few generic slave figures that do emerge in Roman art are the male and female childminders, the nurse and pedagogue, who are stock figures in scenes of domestic life. See M. George, 'Family and *familia* on Roman biographical Sarcophagi', *Römische Mitteilungen* 107 (2000), pp. 191–207.
11. E.g., scenes from a fullery (VI.8.20). See I. Baldassarre et al., *Pompei – Pitture e Mosaici* (Rome, Istituto dell'enciclopedia romana, 1990–99) vol. IV, figs. 8b, 8c; scene of shops in forum of Pompeii from the praedia of Julia Felix (II.4.3–4), see Baldassarre, *Pompei – Pitture e Mosaici*, vol. III, figs. 113–24.
12. *De Agricultura* 59.
13. Petronius, *Satyricon* 28, 30, 40, 41. For slaves at the banquet, see J. D'Arms, 'Slaves at Roman Convivia', in W.J. Slater (ed.), *Dining in a Classical Context* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991) pp. 171–83.
14. Seneca, *De Clementia* 1.24.1. The date of the debate is unfortunately unknown. Less reliable historically, but expressing the same concern, is the emperor Alexander Severus' wish to dress the imperial staff according to status, including slaves, so that they could be recognized among the rest of

- the population and consequently more easily monitored and prevented from associating with the freeborn. The jurists Ulpian and Paul reportedly advised against it. (*SHA Severus Alexander* 27 1–4)
15. For the house as a small republic and the master's control over all its occupants, see Seneca, *De Ira* 3.35; *Epistles* 47.14; Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* 8.16.
16. Appian, *Bellum Civile* 2.120.
17. Theory of natural slavery: Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1254b 27–31; P. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 107–27.
18. Slaves as articulate tools: Varro, *De Re Rustica* 1.17; K.R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1987) pp.21–30.
19. K.R. Bradley, 'Animalizing the slave: the truth of fiction', *Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000), p. 123.
20. *Metamorphoses* 3.24: 'my body hair was thickening into bristles and my soft skin hardening into hide. At the ends of my palms my fingers were losing their number and being all compressed together into single hoofs.... My face was immense now, mouth spread, nostrils gaping, lips sagging. My ears too grew immoderately long and bristly.'
21. Vitruvius, *De architectura* 6.1.9–11; Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis* 2.80.189. E.g., Cicero's sneer at the 'slavish tan' (*color servilis*) the senator Piso acquired while governor of Syria (*In Pisonem* 1.1).
22. Chalk on feet: Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* 35.199, Juvenal, *Satires* 1.111; caps on heads, and garlands: Aulus Gellius, *Noctes* 6.4; notifiable defects: *Digest* 21.1.
23. *Satyricon* 102. In the end, instead of painting their bodies, they decide to adopt the appearance of runaway slaves, an easier disguise achieved by shaving their hair and eyebrows and creating the effect of facial brands with ink.
24. Physical punishment of slaves was common in Roman society, e.g. Ovid, *Amores* 1.6.18–20; Petronius, *Satyricon* 49, 69, Juvenal, *Satires* 5.170–4; 6.474–95; 14.15–24; Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 3.16; especially gruesome is the story of Pomponeia, wife of Quintus Cicero, who had her slave Philologus tortured to death by forcing him to slice off pieces of his own flesh, roast and eat it as punishment for betraying her husband, and thereby causing his death (Plutarch, *Cicero* 49.2–4). For retaliation by slaves, see Pliny, *Epistles* 3.14; further, see Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, p.113. For branding and tattooing, C.P. Jones, 'Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies* 77 (1987) pp. 139–155; see also D'Arms, 'Slaves at Roman Convivia'. Martial (*Epigrams* 2.29.9–10) mocks a former slave who tries to cover scars on his forehead from branding or tattooing with a long fringe.
25. Aesop, a writer of Greek fables, who according to tradition was a slave, is described in the *Life of Aesop* as 'pot-bellied weasel-armed, hunchbacked, a squalid, squinting, swarthy midget with crooked legs,.
26. Juvenal, *Satires* (11.149–55) contrasting foreign to native-born slaves: 'their hair cut close and uncurled, and only combed today because of the company. One is the son of a hardy shepherd; another of the cattleman; he sighs for the mother he has not seen for so long, and thinks wistfully of the little cottage and the kids he knew so well; a lad of open countenance and simple modesty such as those ought to be who are clothed in glowing purple.'
27. Martial, *Epigrams* 9.5.4; Seneca pities the adult male wine-server, who, to please his master, 'must dress like a woman and wrestle with his advancing years ...who is kept a boy even though he is a man ...who is kept beardless by having his hair smoothed away or plucked out by the roots' (*Epistles* 47.7).
28. Both Livia and Julia, wife and daughter respectively of the emperor Augustus, kept dwarf slaves, while Augustus himself, however, thinking their ugliness a bad rather than a good omen, disapproved of the practice (Augustus: Pliny, the Elder *Historia Naturalis* 7.75; Suetonius, *Augustus* 83). Apotropaic effect: Plutarch, *Moralia* 681F; *Quaestiones conviviales* 5.7.3; Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria* 2.5.11) reports that Romans would pay more for deformed than for physically perfect slaves.
29. Quintilian says: 'as a rule, it is unbecoming to raise or contract the shoulders. For it shortens the neck and produces a mean and slavish gesture, which is even suggestive of dishonesty when men assume an attitude of flattery, admiration or fear' (*Institutio Oratoria* 11.3.83) See M. Gleason, *Making Men* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995) ch.3.
30. In giving instructions on the proper posture for a speaker, Seneca (*Epistles* 52.12) states: 'If you mark them carefully, all acts are always significant, and you can gauge character by even the most trifling signs.'
31. Lucan, *Bellum Civile* 5.497–677.
32. Plutarch, *Camillus* 33.2–6; *Romulus* 29.4–6.
33. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 6.3.32.

34. In a poem of mourning for the death of a friend's favourite slave, Statius notes that the slave's appearance, carriage and behaviour rise above his servile status, leading to poetic speculation that perhaps somehow he was not really a slave at all. He is, however, the exceptional slave who proves the rule. (*Silvae* 2.6: 'What if he were no real slave? Myself I saw and marked his bearing, how he would have thee only for his lord; but nobler yet was the spirit in his face, and breeding showed clear in his youthful blood.')
35. *Epigrams* 3.33.4.
36. Most notably Seneca, *De Beneficiis* 3.18–28, and *Epistles* 47. On the relatively undisputed acceptance of slavery by Romans, see Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, ch. 7 (esp. pp. 136–53) and ch. 8; Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*, *passim*. W. Thalmann argues that a literary exploration of these tensions in Plautus's play *Captivi* 'negotiates anxieties surrounding slavery, and the master-slave relation, in order finally to exorcize them' ('Versions of Slavery in the *Captivi* of Plautus', *Ramus* 25 [1996] p. 116). The play, in which slaves are disguised as free men and vice versa, exploits elite concerns but in the end reaffirms their faith in the loyalty of the 'good' slave Lyndarus, who turns out in fact to be a freeborn man, and the natural evil of the 'bad' slave Stalagmus, who is taken off to the mines in chains at the play's end.
37. See notes 1 and 3 above (the Caesar and Nero episodes).
38. *Digest* 47.10.15.15.
39. Indeed, on one foray into Rome's dark underbelly, Nero came to blows with the senator Julius Montanus, who subsequently recognized him and was forced to commit suicide. The encounter frightened Nero enough to bring a discreet bodyguard with him on subsequent outings to defend him when necessary (Tacitus, *Annales* 13.25).
40. For the Caesar story, see note 1; for Nero, note 3.
41. P.R.C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: A Social Study of the Emperor's Freedmen and Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).
42. C. Edwards, 'Beware of Imitations: Theatre and the Subversion of Imperial Identity', in J. Eisner and J. Masters (eds), *Reflections of Nero* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1994) pp.83–97.

BETWEEN ANCIENT AND MODERN

Representing the Slave's Body in Ottoman Society

EHUD R. TOLEDANO

I

Slavery and the slave trade were an integral part of Ottoman society from inception to demise. Though less important economically, slavery was a vital social, cultural and political component of Ottoman life. At any given point in time, slaves were to be found in all walks of life, inhabiting both ends of the social spectrum. Most of them served as domestics and menial workers in urban centres, but they were also agricultural labourers in certain parts of Anatolia. Slaves served in the highest positions in the realm as well, as generals and middle- or high-ranking officeholders in government. This last category will be referred to hereafter by the Ottoman term – *kuls*. Most female slaves carried the heavy burden of daily household chores, but others wielded considerable power in harem politics, most of all at the imperial court. Within the court, and to an extent also within the harems of the imperial elite, this was the cognate institution of the *kul* system. Hence, we shall refer to the entire phenomenon of elite slavery as *kul/harem* slavery. The apparent diversity within it, as the obviously resulting internal contradictions, made Ottoman slavery – and slavery in earlier and contemporary Muslim societies too – a difficult, often intractable, topic of scholarly investigation. This complexity, I believe, accounts, at least in part, for the limited incorporation, so far, of slavery in Islamic societies into studies of comparative world slavery.

It is clear that the presence of slaves at the top echelons of the Ottoman social ladder has been the root cause of the problem. For slavery is, almost by definition, a phenomenon we identify with the lower end of social existence. Scholars are used to dealing with slavery in the context of marginality, not as part of elite history. So much so that a few leading Ottomanists have argued for the exclusion of *kul/harem* slavery from the discussion of Ottoman slavery. Some have sought different terms for *kul/harem* slaves, such as ‘the sultan’s servants’, used by Metin Kunt, or ‘state servitors’, as Suraiya Faroqhi writes, whereas Halil Inalcik has implied that perhaps the very association of *kul* and slave is inappropriate.¹

I have taken a different line, suggesting that the appropriate way of understanding the phenomenon is through an *integrated continuum*, as opposed to a *free/slave dichotomy*, with varying degrees of servitude and

honour for each type of slaves, so that we can bring into the definition several of the most pertinent dimensions of slavery – namely power relations, legal status, and sociocultural considerations.² In this way, I believe, not only is the integrity of the institution maintained, but also the challenge can enrich the investigation and provide some fascinating insights into the intricacies of Ottoman society as a whole.

I also believe that slavery must be studied on the micro-historical level as a *relationship* between master/mistress and slave, a relationship far more complex, mitigated and mutually dependent than a mere legal proprietary context can explain. There is no point denying that power played a role in that relationship, and that owner and slave were not equal partners, but a great deal more than mere coercion was required in order to extract labour from slaves or facilitate their daily interactions within the household. Indeed, households (*kapi* in Turkish, *bayt* in Arabic) were the main units, or building blocks, of Ottoman society from the seventeenth century to the end of empire. Households, of course, did exist before that period, but their crucial role as social, political, economic and even cultural units takes shape only during the seventeenth and – even more specifically – the eighteenth centuries. Grandee households were linked by social networks across the Ottoman lands, and power, legitimacy, goods, services, honour and symbols of sovereignty and stature flowed through them to make Ottoman state and society what they were. Slavery was embedded in that system, serving as one of the main methods of recruitment and socialization into the elite household.

Indeed, the discourse on Ottoman slavery reflects the ideas and notions of the Ottoman office-holding elite. This does not mean that slaves were invisible or voiceless, since an important part of that elite consisted of *kul/harem* slaves. But, rather, the voices of domestic, menial, and agricultural slaves have had to be recovered by modern scholarship, a task not made easy by the sources discovered thus far. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said characterizes the relationship between Occidental and Oriental civilizations as essentially one between ‘a strong and a weak partner’.³ In the following passage from Said, I shall take the liberty of mutilating his text, without however distorting his intention. Where Said speaks about Occidental’ and Oriental’, I shall read him as talking about ‘master’ and ‘slave’ in the Ottoman East, as follows:

The Oriental [the slave] is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European [the master] is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’.... Knowledge of the Orient [of slavery], because generated out of strength, in a sense creates the Orient [slavery], the Oriental [the slave], and his world ... the Oriental [the slave] is depicted as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or a prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual).... The point is that in each of these cases, the Oriental [the slave] is contained and represented by dominating frameworks.

This depiction encapsulates the discussion before us, as it weaves content and form together, to produce a truly complex picture – to the utmost delight of the historian. As already noted, unlike the situation in the study of slavery in other societies, scholars who deal with Muslim societies have not been able so far to discover many sources that emanate from the slaves themselves. As of now, we do not possess first-hand, direct accounts by Ottoman slaves, nor by slaves in other Muslim societies. No diaries compiled by slaves have been found; no slave family histories or the like have come to light. Slaves do appear in Ottoman texts, but these are mostly government and court records, where slaves made statements to judges and police investigators. These utterances were recorded by state officials, and are therefore at least once removed from genuine personal accounts. Thus, Ottoman slaves are indeed ‘*contained*’ and ‘*represented*’ by their masters or other non-slaves in society.

But the study of slavery in Muslim societies is faced with yet another problem. That is, the discourse on slavery in these societies has been dominated by Western and Western-trained scholars, who have shaped the basic notions, ideas and language employed in the debate. Only in recent years has a discourse on slavery been generated in Muslim societies, and only the one in Turkey has been able to interact with the Western discourse on Muslim slavery. Either by choice, or yielding to sociopolitical and cultural constraints, the discourse on slavery in most Arab societies has been a separate one, debating different issues and providing different interpretations to those we encounter in the European-Turkish discourse. But different discourses also existed during the earlier Ottoman centuries, and we can distinguish between the way the Europeans viewed and discussed slavery in the Ottoman Orient, and the way the Ottomans themselves saw the issue and debated its various aspects.

For the purposes of the present discussion, i.e. the different approaches to the representation of the slave’s body, we should first treat the way contemporary European observers viewed and represented the body of Ottoman slaves, since the evidence is fairly accessible and has been dealt with before by competent scholars. The Ottoman representation and approach are more complex, the sources are less accessible and the topic has not been treated sufficiently in the scholarly literature. We begin with an interesting combination of elements, which we have in a modern work written by a Western-trained Arab scholar, Rana Kabbani, who studied European representations of the Oriental slave body.⁴

Kabbani dates the myths of harem slavery to the Middle English romances, citing, among others, the romance of *Floris and Blancheflur*. There, in what was one of the earliest references to the sultan’s harem as sexual paradise, the inner court is described as guarded by eunuchs and constantly supplied with beautiful female slaves by slave merchants. It was in such ways, Kabbani affirms, that the East acquired currency ‘as a land that traded in voluptuousness, a land where sexual desires could be gratified to a hilt’.

Having become an unavoidable *topos* in European travel literature, the seraglio, she argues, has fostered images of Eastern male and female, free and slave, that cast the male in a cruel and vengeful role, the females as both ‘erotic victims and as scheming witches’.⁵

Part and parcel of the Oriental male image, as seen in Europe, was his role as slave dealer. Here we could turn to Orientalist paintings for the most powerful and accessible evidence. This is also where both dealer and slave are dehumanized, the dealer for treating the slaves as chattel, the slaves for being so treated. Here we come upon various depictions of slave markets, especially from the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. The body of the female slave is represented in its utter humiliation, often naked, sometimes bound, out there for the inspection of customers, totally defenceless.⁶ It is hard to argue against interpretations, such as Kabbani’s and others, which push the symbolic aspect of such representations to argue further that the Oriental female slave body stands for a larger theme, namely the Orient’s weakness, submissiveness and powerlessness vis-à-vis the strong, dominant, powerful Occident.

Such images went well with the spirit of imperialism and the glorified self-image of the ‘European gentleman’, who brought civilization to the ‘barbaric savages’ of the East. Kabbani cites specific examples of Pygmalion-type relationships between a European upper-class man and his purchased female slave – Edward Lane and Gerard de Nerval spring to mind.⁷ There, the power situation is clear; the roles represent not only master and slave, but also mentor and student, benefactor and rescued, all of which went well with the notions of the ‘white man’s burden’ and the ‘*mission civilisatrice*’.

Orientalist paintings, however, ‘embellished’ the picture, in that the female figures in them were not foreign-looking but actually conformed to conventional standards of European beauty, with the Circassian harem slave, not the African menial one, as the most prevalent prototype in sexually suggestive scenes. The Circassian appears both in literary texts, such as de Nerval’s, and in paintings, such as Lecomte de Nouy’s. Orientalist painters who never set foot in the Orient – not an unknown breed – got their inspiration from travellers’ literature, often written by people who themselves had no personal experience of the Muslim East. Thus, Kabbani further argues, the slave body in European representation of the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries was more ‘a metaphor and myth’ than actual reality, and as such it mirrored European social realities – that is, bourgeois morality and harsh social codes—more than it accurately reflected the Orient it created and purported to present.⁸

Fantasy and a developed sexual imagination had to compensate for the lack of direct, unmediated experience of harem life. Not surprisingly, the working of the imagination was most in evidence with regard to representation of the slave’s body, for which, seeing with one’s own eyes is almost a *sine qua non*. Few of those Europeans who wrote about the imperial court had actually seen the inside of that secluded and well-guarded place. A chosen few, mostly

professionals such as doctors, commissioned artists and favoured diplomats or military experts with long periods of residence in Ottoman domains, crossed the Threshold of Felicity, as the imperial court was known, and were permitted to see the male part of the court. Rarely, European women, who managed to gain the confidence of harem ladies, were allowed to set foot in the female part of the court.⁹ Of those few men and women, even fewer reported to their compatriots what they saw on the inside; some wrote about their impressions and published memoirs or collections of letters. The gap between these reports and the notions current in the genre is significant.

Thus, both writers and painters, the two main groups who represented the bodies of Oriental – and more specifically Ottoman – slaves to Western, mostly European, audiences, were doubly hampered in their work. They had either little or no access to the subject they attempted to represent, and they were products of a cultural attitude, or a preconditioned slant, that perpetuated myths about the Orient and Ottoman slavery that had prevailed in their own societies for quite some time. There is, however, no guarantee that, had these writers and painters had access to actual, living Ottoman slaves, they would have been able to transcend their cultural bias and see something different from what they were taught to expect. Whichever way we look at it, the representation of Ottoman slaves – their socio-economic as well as their physical appearance – tells us more about Western societies and their attitude to slavery and the Orient than it reflects Ottoman realities, inasmuch as one believes that such realities existed outside their represented forms. One does not need to adopt a postmodernist view of things in order to recognize that in such a culturally loaded area as this, mind often triumphs over matter, figuratively speaking.

But as we move from European representations of the Ottoman slave's body to their Ottoman counterpart, we do not necessarily overcome all these impediments to a 'real' view of the subject matter at hand. It is true that Ottoman accounts of the slave's body did not suffer from a lack of direct access or want of personal experience. Ottoman writers and painters had first-hand knowledge of how slaves of various ethnic origins looked; they had ample opportunities to observe their behaviour or form an opinion about their character. Many of those who wrote plays, novels or essays about the nature of slavery in Ottoman society grew up in households where slaves were an integral part of daily life. No few of them had close family members who were slaves, often a mother or a wife. They took slavery for granted, were blind to its iniquities, and – for the most part – saw no harm in maintaining it. The main impetus to review and reconsider the merits and demerits of the practice came as a response to severe criticism from West European, largely British, anti-slavery advocates and abolitionist activists. That, however, did not begin to occur before the 1860s, and actually matured only in the 1870s and 1880s.¹⁰

If the problem was not access to information or lack of personal experience with slavery, what then did stand in the way of Ottoman representations of the

physical aspects of slaves in the Empire? The problem was actually that one could not transcend one's own culture in representing what one saw. Slavery was so deeply embedded in Ottoman and local culture that it was encoded with preconceived notions and meaning that reinforced the existing images of slaves. Mixing roles, statuses and race, inside observers constantly and automatically produced and reproduced the representations that we encounter in the sources. Decoding these texts is difficult, and not always possible; but perhaps the best way to go about it is to stick to basics, rather than search for an elusive abstract. Let us, then, begin with the most mundane life-and-death situations.

In a recent study of sixteenth-century court records from the district of Üsküdar – now the Asian part of Istanbul – Yvonne Seng rightly puts her finger on the problematics of fully appreciating the position of slaves in Ottoman society. In trying to convey attitudes towards the physical 'placing' of the slave in Ottoman society, she follows the evaluator of an estate, as he was walking on the property of a deceased scholar and compiling a probate inventory. The assessor moved from the stable to the house and recorded what he saw in the following list: 'a pack-horse, 240 akçe; a slave by the name of Süleyman, 2,200 akçe; a tray (*tepsi*), 8; a cup (*tas*), 6; a rug (*kaliçe*), 155...'. Seng notes that 'Süleyman the slave was frozen *in situ* between stable and house, captured in mid-duty'.¹¹ But slaves, as she fully recognizes, were not regarded as objects, which Islamic law classifies as 'mute property' (*mal-i samit*), but rather are placed in the same category as livestock, under 'vocal property' (*mal-i natik*). She further argues, and rightly so, that even that category does not do justice to the actual social position enjoyed by slaves in Ottoman society.

In a way, this legal classification was at once pertinent and irrelevant. It was pertinent in regard to the representation of slaves in the outward, physical dimension; it was irrelevant in dealing with the slave's humanity, and in addressing the many facets of his or her behaviour as a person. To separate body from soul, so to speak, seems to me too mechanistic, as there is often a real spill-over from one to the other: the way we view people, in this case slaves, tends to mix personality and appearance, so that attributes frequently cohere with each other – a vile character is attributed to an ugly person, beauty reflects kindness and so on. Hence, I would argue, the way the body of the slave was represented in society matched the prevailing perceptions of the slave's personality, and both reflected some deeply ingrained social and cultural attitudes. So let us first deal with the physical aspect, then briefly explore issues of the slave's personality.

The physical representation of slaves appears in Ottoman sources either in various types of written texts or in art forms and what might be called 'recreational' forms. I shall first explain these categories and the classification adopted in this article, then take a closer look at the evidence which has been used for drawing preliminary guidelines for studying the way the slave's body

was represented in Ottoman sources.

Written Texts

Within the category of texts, we can discern two types in which one can find descriptions of slaves: official state records, or literary, instructional, and scholarly works:

Official state records: Descriptions of slaves, or rather elements of the slave's body, served a specific and often quite mundane purpose: the main concern of those who produced them was to assess the value of the slave, which was often determined by his or her physical attributes, and to classify the slave for tax or commercial ends. In legal documents of the state, the purpose was to identify the slave as either a victim of a crime, so that damages could be determined, a perpetrator, so that a punishment could be meted out, or a witness, so that the value of his or her testimony could be assessed. All these were very practical issues, and classifying slaves according to the various categories was done in a direct and matter-of-fact manner. Still, the very existence of certain categories, and their hierarchies, reflects an 'order of things' and an outlook that tells us something – perhaps no more than something – about the society and social order that produced and sustained them for a long period.

Literary, instructional, and scholarly works: This type of text is more reflective and evocative of a value system and cultural attitude than the records of state. Here we may group together the various literary products into three groups:

1. poetry, proverbs, jokes, tales of various kinds and community lore;
2. instructional products, such as guides for rulers and bureaucrats, travelogues and geography books;
3. scholarly products, such legal literature, and chronicles (although quite a number of these were government-inspired and financed).

Art Forms and 'Recreational' Forms

In this class of sources, the stress is not on the written word, but rather on the audio-visual impact. Ottoman paintings portray images of slaves, mostly in miniatures attached to bound manuscripts, and we also possess slave representations in the performing arts. Slaves appear in recreational or instructive products such as plays acted out in the streets, and later in public theatres, in performances of the shadow theatre, dance shows, and in singing at the market place, or at periodic regional fairs.

In the remaining pages, some of the available evidence will be examined, and tentative, preliminary findings and impressions will be presented.

In most Muslim societies, the Ottoman one included, slavery was closely associated with an African origin, or more plainly with darkness of skin. This was so despite the fact that among the subjects of the sultan there were not a few slaves of Circassian, Georgian, Greek and Slav extraction. The opposite was also true, actually more so, for almost all Africans in Ottoman society – and many in other Muslim societies – were slaves. Thus, the frequently overlapping categories of ‘slave’ and ‘African’ make it difficult to separate references to a person’s race from references to his or her being a slave. Nevertheless, we can and must try to do that.

Attention to the slave’s body became necessary already at the very beginning, that is at the point of purchase, when the buyer was considering whether or not to buy a slave who was being offered for sale, be it in a private home, or in the slave market. It is there that slaves were classified into various categories, and both their body and character were being scrutinized. An eleventh-century manual by Ibn Butlan provides detailed advice to buyers of slaves: of the ten pieces of advice he offers, four apply to both male and female slaves, three just to males, two just to females and one is addressed to the seller of slaves.¹² A second look at the same list would yield another interesting point: only one item deals, in detail, with the slave’s body, warning the buyer against tricks employed by dealers in order to conceal bodily defects and present the slave’s look in a more attractive – though quite ephemeral – package. Opposed to that, no less than six items deal with the slave’s character and treatment, and three offer advice on how to detect pregnancy and avoid claims of having got a slave pregnant.

In another section of his guidebook,¹³ Ibn Butlan describes many types of slaves according to their ethnic origins. The categories are geographical and racial, mixing both body and character issues, as if naturally intertwined. Two distinct examples might suffice to get the gist of the matter:

The colour of the people of ... [the eastern] lands is white tinged with red. Their bodies are fertile, their voice clear, their sicknesses few, their faces handsome, their characters noble, their sheep plentiful, their trees tall. There is no anger in them and no courage because of their equitable dispositions; they are people of calm and meek temper. All this is because of the temperate sun in that region, their temperate food and their clear water.¹⁴ ...

The Nubian women, of all the black races, have ease and grace and delicacy. Their bodies are dry, while their flesh is tender; they are strong and at the same time slender and firm. The climate of Egypt suits them, since they drink the water of the Nile, but if they are removed to some place other than Egypt, diseases of the blood and acute sicknesses overcome them and pain racks their bodies. Their characters are pure, their appearance attractive, and there is in them religion and goodness, virtue, chastity and submissiveness to the master, as if they had a natural bent for slavery.¹⁵

In this context, it is perhaps instructive to cite the observation of Dr Louis Frank, a medical doctor of German extraction, who served French and Austrian rulers in the early part of the nineteenth century. He spent time in Egypt under Bonaparte and compiled an important report on the condition of slaves in Cairo at the time:

It is the custom of the inhabitants of Cairo to judge that a Negro is of good character when they have fine eyes and the whites of their eyes are very white and when they have red gums and tongues without brown or blackish discoloration, the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet pink, and handsome nails. They maintain that the Negroes whose white of the eye is brown or reddish, and whose tongue and gums have black stains, are of bad disposition and are completely incorrigible.¹⁶

Frank says that he knew of counter-examples in both directions, but he is reluctant to flatly reject those bizarre views and others, including stories he heard in Cairo about certain blacks being offered for sale who were cannibals, and 'could be recognized by a little tail, or a prolongation of the coccyx bone'.¹⁷ Dr Frank is, however, aware that representations of the slave body are culture-bound, and that beauty standards are relative by nature. He writes (the italics are mine):

The Negroes who are brought from the kingdom of Darfur are most definitely black and are Negroes in the full sense of the word. Generally, they have a wide flat nose, thick upturned lips, and in sum a physiognomy *displeasing to the Europeans*. Their moral qualities seemed to me to be in perfect accord with their physiognomy. Finally, the Negroes who are brought from Fezzan are less black and distinguish themselves by their docility and intelligence.

As we turn to the visual evidence that has been examined so far, we might quote Bernard Lewis's characterization of the manner in which slaves were represented in Ottoman paintings:

The overwhelming majority of blacks who appear in Islamic paintings are ... neither sacred figures nor monsters, neither exotic nor erotic. They are quite simply slaves and servants. They appear in countless pictures of court life, domestic life, and various outdoor scenes; in illustrations of narrative literature and other forms of belles-lettres; and – in Ottoman times – in the sumptuous albums portraying celebrations of special occasions at the Ottoman court ... the black ... appears ... almost invariably carrying a tray, pushing a broom, leading a horse, wielding a spade, pulling an oar or a rope, or discharging some other subordinate or menial task. Blacks appear as servants and attendants, as masons and gardeners, as grooms and huntsmen, or as boatmen. Mostly they are male, though female figures occasionally

Slaves' sexuality is more frequently referred to in literary sources than in visual ones. And there is far less pictorial depiction of slaves as sex objects than mention of their sexuality in textual evidence.¹⁹ European paintings are far more explicit in showing female slaves either nude or in sexually suggestive positions than Ottoman or other Islamic paintings. This was probably due to the dual impact of a heightened European imagination and the sociocultural reluctance in Islamic societies to deal overtly with a delicate subject.

What emerges from Ottoman and earlier descriptions of the slave's body is a particular look that is considered attractive in either male or female slaves, a standard which, by the way, was not different for non-slaves. Standards were by no means universal, and – as even Dr Frank recognized in the passage cited above – they varied from one culture to another. The impact of look was so culture-bound that even colours were not referred to in the same terms, with sometimes a wide spectrum of difference being registered. In general, Ottoman elite standards were – perhaps not so surprisingly – rather 'foreign'; while these may have varied from harem to harem, possibly catering to individual tastes, a psychological analysis might lead us to assume that there was a universal element which transcended this or that period, this or that locale. Thus, for what constituted female beauty in the eyes of the imperial harem under Sultan Abdülhamit II, at the end of the nineteenth century, we have direct and rather compelling evidence.

What I have in mind here is the correspondence between Süreyya Paşa, chief secretary to Sultan Abdülhamit II, and Hasan Hilmi Paşa, governor-general of Konya. In 1891–2, the two dignitaries exchanged some 21 letters and telegrams, discussing the efforts of the governor on behalf of the palace to procure female slaves for the imperial harem.²⁰ These documents tell a fascinating story about the actual state of the slave trade in Circassian female slaves in the Ottoman Empire during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Briefly, it became quite difficult to get the desired type of slaves, although the palace was willing to pay high prices for them.

For our purposes, the relevant points are two: the preferred body-related specifications were, first, of age – around 14 years old – then of colour – blond hair and blue eyes; and great attention was paid to the health, nutrition and cleanliness of potential recruits. The link between looks and health was produced by realities, rather than by choice, for the girls who qualified under the age and colour criteria were in a rather poor physical state, owing to the harsh living conditions they endured as a result of migration from the Russian-held Caucasus into the empire. Hard-pressed and under criticism from the imperial court, the governor argued that the girls he selected indeed possessed the good looks required, but that they needed proper care and a nutritious diet, to be provided at the imperial harem, so that they could recover and realize

their full potential. He specifically referred to hygiene in recommending that the girls be sent to the hot bath (*hamam*) twice a week. This in itself, incidentally, offers a rare indication of cleanliness standards in elite circles at the time.

To wind up these notes on beauty standards, let me note that in Ottoman and sources from earlier Muslim societies, there are regular references to certain parts of the slave's body and neglect of others. Thus, the head of the slave, mainly the eyes, hair and teeth, receive special attention, and authors also comment about build, for example whether the slave is slender, heavy, tall or short. Occasionally, writers remark upon unusual features in the slave's body, as when Ibn Butlan, mentioned above, praises the beauty of Armenian women, except for their 'peculiarly ugly feet'.²¹ We also find concern about smell, especially bad breath or body odour, and there seems to be a preoccupation with what might be called 'emission of bodily fluids', either in the form of sweat (armpits), grease (hair), saliva or – when women are concerned – vaginal fluids. Attention is paid to the digestive system, which is seen to affect and reflect health matters, and there is common mention of cleanliness or more frequently the lack thereof.²²

But attention to the slave's body was not merely a matter of physical appearance and attraction. Rather, in large measure, it reflected deep concern for the slave's health, often not only linked to his or her ability to perform the chores intended for them, but affecting their actual survivability. High mortality on some of the routes, especially those originating in Africa, weeded out the weaker among the slaves, but experience had taught both dealers and buyers that many slaves contracted diseases and perished as a result of the drastic change of climate and nutrition that occurred when entering the Ottoman heartlands. In modern terms we would probably attribute that to the failure of the African slaves' immune system to cope with unfamiliar bacterial environments of the European and Middle Eastern domains of the empire.

In any event, buyers were carefully examining the slave's body in search of various popularly known diagnostic signs. In order to appreciate the magnitude of the problem, it is enough to peruse the list of illnesses provided by Dr Louis Frank, in the 1802 report already mentioned above. His list includes eight common conditions found in African slaves imported into Egypt, and the ways to treat them. They were: colds or afflictions of the respiratory tract; ophthalmia; smallpox; skin disease known in Arabic as '*Aysh al-Madina* (bread of the city); diarrhoea and dysentery; the plague; the Guinea worm, the dragon or the scourge of Medina; and various venereal diseases.²³

In addition, both buyers and sellers of female slaves were also highly concerned about possible pregnancy. Pregnancy was, and is, a peculiar condition in that it has physical manifestations that can be concealed, in many cases, for the first four to six months, at times even longer than that. Islamic law prohibited the sale of pregnant women, giving them some protection and certain rights. In a way, pregnancy was a kind of 'insurance policy' for the

woman, because it attached her to the man who impregnated her or was alleged to have done so. The law also stipulated that in such cases, the child would be free, not a slave, and the mother be freed upon the death of her master. Therefore, sellers wanted to make sure at the time of sale that female slaves were not pregnant, so that no claims against the dealer could later be made. And buyers wanted to ensure that female slaves were 'pregnancy-free' when purchased, in order to avoid having later to recognize as their own, with all entitlements involved, a child whom they had not actually fathered.

This problem focused special attention on the body of female slaves, and spawned practical recommendations aimed at reducing the risk involved. Without getting into too much detail here, suffice it to say that period monitoring was one device; another was simply to delegate the matter to a knowledgeable woman, often a midwife, who was to examine the slave and help verify her condition. This also called for special measures to induce abortion in case these precautionary steps had failed. As in the case of a Circassian female slave in mid-nineteenth century Cairo, which I have published in several versions,²⁴ both physical and chemical means were used to forcibly terminate the pregnancy. The slave in question was sold to the household of Mehmet Ali, s grandson, but was promptly returned to the dealer – who had impregnated her – as soon as it was discovered that she was pregnant.

The issue of slave pregnancy focuses attention on the objectification of female slave bodies, leading us to an inherent paradox: slave bodies were often represented as sex objects, but their sexuality could not be detached from their reproductive capacity. This was the main tangle of concubinage, as it began with sexual intentions, but often ended in the 'family way'. The paradox drove the dynamics of elite harems throughout the Ottoman Empire, and calls for a thorough and insightful investigation.

The last feature I wish to mention concerns the representation of a special kind of male slaves – the eunuchs. We shall do that without delving into Dr Louis Frank's gory description of the operation performed on male slaves to make them into eunuchs or, incidentally, his comments on genital mutilation of female slaves intended to control their sexual drive. I shall also deliberately skip similar descriptions by Burton and Penzer, including the mechanics of what eunuchs had to do when urinating.²⁵ Our concern here is not with these medical procedures, but rather with their impact on the image and character perception of the victims.

Literary sources make references to the body and character of eunuchs, mentioning their propensity for obesity, their effeminate demeanour – as in their high-pitched voice and body language, their urological problems and other issues which we would associate nowadays with hormonal and psychological disorders, such as eccentric social behaviour, inexplicable or unpredictable anger, tantrums and the like. These were, of course, a direct consequence of emasculation, but they were exacerbated and given a peculiar

spin as a result of the immense political influence senior eunuchs came to possess during certain periods in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While their influence declined in the nineteenth century, they were still players of some importance in the sociopolitical networks of the Ottoman Empire until its demise. Suffice it here to mention the role of two chief black eunuchs under Sultan Abdülhamit II, and the importance of the chief black eunuchs of two of Egypt's rulers in the nineteenth century—Abbas Paşa and Khedive Ismail.²⁶

With regard to our discussion, it is interesting to note that official Ottoman documents do not classify eunuchs according to bodily characteristics beyond recording the fact that the person is a eunuch. This is evident in the *Register of the Biographies of the Imperial African Eunuchs* of 1903, which I first published in 1984.²⁷ In that register, one finds the biographies of 194 eunuchs belonging to the sultan's household at the turn of the twentieth century. No fewer than 100 of those eunuchs were recruited during the last decade of the nineteenth century. The register provides the following information about the eunuchs: province of origin within the empire from which imported to Istanbul (not where captured originally); rank; section of the imperial household where served; and date of entry into the imperial harem. No reference is made, however, to any of their physical attributes. This is, possibly, because a 'eunuch' was such a fixed category within the Ottoman system of meaning, with well-recognized physical and mental attributes, that any further description was superfluous.

III

In summary, it may be appropriate to reflect briefly on the implications of the Ottoman way of representing the slave's body, inasmuch as they perhaps reveal broader sociocultural attitudes. As already mentioned, in the Ottoman context, the slave's body did not serve as a metaphor of some abstract idea, nor did it acquire a symbolic meaning for a larger issue. Rather, the Ottomans examined, classified and evaluated the body of the slave for practical purposes. Yet, these mundane activities were rooted in a system of meaning and hence can teach us something about the sentiments that informed the categories used in them, as also about the way the Ottoman elite viewed the various types of slaves in its midst.

Ottoman elite culture was an evolving, dynamic synthesis of several components, reflecting pre-Ottoman traditions as well as various local cultures of the peoples the empire came to rule and incorporate. An *inclusivist* culture by nature, it forged a world view centred on Istanbul, yet with the experience of dominating both European-Christian and Middle Eastern and Asian Muslim communities, with their own ways, practices and norms. In all these, slaves were present, and laws were in place to deal with them. These were, for the most part, based on Biblical and Quranic standards and practices, though local norms had often prevailed to forge the way slaves were viewed and treated.

Ottoman elite culture came to hold a view of slaves that was both ethnically and functionally determined. That is, slaves were contained and defined within categories that were aware of the slave's ethnic origins – i.e. whether from Africa or from the Caucasus – and allotted to them a role in the labour market and a social space with their ethnic background in mind.

I do, however, agree with Hakan Erdem's view that the Ottoman lacked the familiarity with the African context and tended to refer to all dark-skinned slaves as 'black' (*zenci*), despite the fact that there was a great variety within that group, and the only sub-group they recognized among Africans was that of Ethiopians.²⁸ They were far more familiar with the variety of light-skinned slaves, at times insisting on fine distinctions even within the Circassians themselves. Erdem rightly points out that during the nineteenth century, the trend was towards homogenization of origins, especially with regard to non-Africans, who then tended to come almost exclusively from the Caucasus. Slaves coming from African regions were overwhelmingly women, and they were destined for domestic service in urban elite households, whereas Circassians and Georgians also headed for harems, but were seen as potential concubines and future wives and mothers (if female) or as future officeholders (if male). This meant that white slaves were relatively easily absorbed into elite society, whereas the Africans, also not infrequently joining urban and rural families, were incorporated into lower social classes. Thus ethnicity, once simply called race, more often than not determined the slave's type of employment and consequently her or his social placement, both when a slave and after manumission.

Thus while slaves were definitely a familiar sight in Ottoman urban society, they were yet seen as 'the other'. This is especially so with regard to African slaves, but the peoples of the Caucasus, too, were seen as outside the scope of 'Ottoman civilization' and certainly until the point of purchase and 're-socialization' were regarded as members of an outgroup.²⁹ For the Africans, the lack of legal freedom was a real impediment to full participation in social life, but as the nineteenth century progressed, for *kul/harem* slaves the actual meaning of bondage lost a great deal of its restricting nature. During the last quarter of the century and the last phase of empire, constitutionalists used the slavery metaphor in their struggle for civil rights reform. In some of their essays, Young Ottoman writers likened the situation under the monarchy to a life of bondage, and the restrictions imposed on various political freedoms to chains restraining slaves.³⁰

Nonetheless, there was no significant *metaphoric* use of the slave's *body* in representations of slavery. It is worth noting that even in the plays and novels which appeared in the empire from the 1870s onwards, and in which strong anti-slavery sentiments were expressed, there are few representations of the slave's body, although one should reserve final judgement until further research is conducted into that question.³¹ Be that as it may, we may have at least opened up a debate about the Ottoman attitude towards the slave's body,

which the conference organized by Thomas Wiedemann at Nottingham in September 2000 amply shows to have important comparative potential.

NOTE ON ARABIC AND TURKISH transliteration

Transliteration of Arabic words follows the IJMES conventional style, and transliteration of Turkish words follows modern Turkish conventions.

NOTES

1. For these views, see: I.M. Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: the Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550–1650* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); S. Faroqui, 'The Ruling Elite between Politics and "the Economy"', in H. Inalcik and D. Quataert (eds), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.545–75; H. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), p.87.
2. E.R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1998), pp. 166–68.
3. E.W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p.40. The following quote is from the same page.
4. R. Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986).
5. Quotes in this paragraph are from Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient*, pp. 15–16 and 26 respectively.
6. Ibid., pp.78–9.
7. Ibid., pp.45, 79.
8. Views in this paragraph are from ibid., pp.81–5.
9. For myth versus reality regarding the imperial harem, see L.P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp.3–12. For a discussion of the literature produced by such women, see B. Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992).
10. For the debate over Ottoman slavery and its abolition, and the earlier controversy over the Ottoman slave trade and its suppression, see Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, pp.112–34.
11. Y. Seng, 'A Liminal State: Slavery in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul', in S.E. Marmon (ed.), *Slavery In the Islamic Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999), pp.25–6.
12. Ibn Butlan, *Shira' al-Raqiq*, translated in B. Lewis (ed. and trans.), *Islam: from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople*, Vol II (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp.243–5.
13. See ibid., pp.245–51.
14. Ibid., p.246.
15. Ibid., pp.249–50.
16. L. Frank, 'Mémoire sur le commerce des nègres au Kaire, et sur les maladies auxquelles ils sont sujets en y arrivant (1802)', trans. and introd. by M. Le Gall, in Marmon, *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East*, pp.76–7.
17. Ibid., p.77.
18. B. Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East, An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.97.
19. Ibid.
20. E.R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, pp.36–41.
21. As translated in Lewis, *Islam*, p.250.
22. See ibid., pp.245–51.
23. Frank, 'Mémoire sur le commerce des nègres au Kaire', pp.82–6.
24. E.R. Toledano, 'Shemsigil:A Circassian Slave in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cairo,' in E. Burke III (ed.), *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), pp.59–74.
25. For Dr Frank's descriptions, see Frank, 'Mémoire sur le commerce des nègres au Kaire', pp.74–5 (about eunuchs), and pp.78–9 (about female genital mutilation); Burton's and Penzer's accounts are

cited in Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, p.43.

26. Ibid., p.44, citing A. Osmanoglu's *Babam Abdülhamit*, and ibid., p.45, citing A. Shafiq's *Al-Riqq fi-l-Islam*.
27. For the latest, updated version, see Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, pp.41–53.
28. Y.H. Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800–1909* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), pp.58–62.
29. For attitudes within the Ottoman elite towards slavery, see Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, pp.112–34.
30. See, for example, ibid., pp.119–21.
31. This tentative conclusion is based on the extensive material provided in İ. Parlatir, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1987); on the changing image of the slave in late-Ottoman literature, see B. Sagaster, 'Herren' und 'Sklaven': *der Wandel im Sklavenbild türkischer Literaten in der Spätzeit des Osmanischen Reiches* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1997).

The Image of the Slave in Some Anglo-Saxon and Norse Sources

DAVID PELTERET

Only one session at the first international conference on the history of slavery at the University of Nottingham in 2000 concentrated on medieval slavery. This reflects the dearth of researchers into the history of slavery during this millennium-long period. Though there are now monographs in one or other of the Western European languages of scholarship on medieval slavery in Scandinavia, Iceland, Anglo-Saxon England, France and the Iberian Peninsula, and Italy, Byzantium and the Levant,¹ more extended studies on pre-Viking Ireland² and on Central and Eastern Europe would be valuable additions to this literature. The field is now starting to mature, with further studies appearing or promised on Norway and Italy that offer the possibility of supplementing, refining or revising earlier work that has been published on these geographic areas.³ This is a very desirable development since, as readers of this journal will be well aware, the study of slavery is fraught with ideology and emotion.

Slavery differed from one part of Europe to another, being predominantly agrarian in many areas but urban and domestic in some parts of the Mediterranean. The problems of evaluating various kinds of slavery⁴ are compounded by the those of comparing different societies, especially rural ones.⁵ Old patterns of thinking and methods of intellectual training have also resulted in there being little interaction between historians of the ancient, medieval and early modern periods of European history,⁶ nor do most historians stray beyond modern national boundaries and hardly any beyond a single continent. Thus the continuation of slavery in some Mediterranean countries into the fifteenth century and the contemporaneous existence of both indigenous African slavery⁷ and a slave trade between Africa and the Islamic Middle East remains to be fully examined.⁸ Slavery in the Middle Ages, therefore, presents opportunities for asking new questions and for undertaking much further research. The balance of this paper will be devoted to laying the groundwork for exploring one such question.

Though slaves are mentioned in numerous early-medieval written sources, the restricted nature of the evidence makes it difficult to visualize them as viewed by their free contemporaries. It seemed worthwhile to begin to investigate what a small sample of medieval sources might reveal about how

the body of the slave was represented, in the hope that others will pursue the matter further. Select examples have been chosen mainly from Anglo-Saxon England, with which I am most familiar, with two purposes in mind. The first is to show that there are many pitfalls to beware of in the interpretation of medieval sources, familiar perhaps to medievalists but less likely to be so among those who, commendably, might wish to move beyond their own period of study into that of the Middle Ages. Thus what appear at first sight to be valuable visual delineations of medieval slaves can be found on closer scrutiny to be illusory. The second purpose is to show that verbal depictions of slaves reveal commonalities and continuities between the slavery of the Middle Ages and that of other periods and other places. To reinforce this second point, the final example to be mentioned dates from what might have been called the Later Middle Ages had it referred to a European event, but in fact is drawn from the history of Africa and the Islamic world in order to remind us that the particular challenge of examining medieval – and also early modern – slavery is that we should have a perspective that extends beyond merely the European impact on other parts of the world.

In seeking for an image of the slave in Anglo-Saxon England, it is natural to turn first to the fairly numerous Anglo-Saxon illuminated manuscripts that have chanced to survive. Though not common, portrayals of slaves can be found. They are depicted several times in the Anglo-Saxon illustrated *Hexateuch*, an eleventh-century manuscript probably from St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, now preserved in the British Library as MS Cotton Claudius B iv. The codex contains the text of the first six books of the Bible together with extensive illustrations. One passage in Old English describes the presentation made by Jacob to Esau as described in Genesis.⁹ The vernacular text follows the Vulgate very closely and reads:

From what he had, he separated off a gift for Esau, his brother: two hundred goats and twenty he-goats, and two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, and forty cows, and twenty bulls, and twenty she-asses with their ten colts, and he sent out his slaves [the Old English text uses the standard word for the slave, *theow*, which should *not* be translated as servant], and [he] said to the slaves: 'If you meet Esau, my brother, and he should ask you who you are from, or where you want to go, or who owns the things with which you travel, then say it is from Jacob and he sends it to his lord Esau as a gift.'¹⁰

The accompanying picture on fol.49r is likely to disappoint anyone searching for a distinctive representation of a slave, however, for the artist has used exactly the same model to represent the slave as he or she has to depict Jacob (Figure 1). Both wear a cloak-like mantle held in place by a brooch on the right shoulder. Both their knee-length undergarments have ravelled, or perhaps, decorated, sleeves. The only difference between the two figures is that the slave is apparently younger than Jacob because he is beardless and also carries a

long spear, presumably to defend his animals from attacks by wild beasts. Clearly the artist was thus *not* interested in providing an image of a slave per se.

What seems curious about the picture is that the slave is pointing his finger to his head in a gesture that today in some cultures might indicate that the other person was lacking in mental balance. Since obviously it is highly unlikely that a person in so subordinate a position would make such a suggestion to his interlocutor, an explanation must be found elsewhere for this gesture.



FIGURE 1

JACOB GIVING INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS SLAVE

Source: London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B. iv, fol.49r (reproduced by permission of the British Library).

The late C.R. Dodwell would appear to have done our work for us in a recent posthumous publication.¹¹ He felt he had found an explanation for the gesture in a Carolingian manuscript dating from the second, or more probably third, quarter of the ninth century. It is an illustrated manuscript of the Roman

playwright Terence, now to be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris,¹² but whose provenance is generally accepted to be Reims.¹³ By examining the illustrations in context, Dodwell argued that when a character makes the gesture of pointing one or two fingers to the face or forehead, it depicts puzzlement.¹⁴ One naturally is inclined to defer to an expert in a field that is not one's own, though his explanation seems strained when one examines the Genesis text. A more satisfactory explanation of the gesture, however, might be that it attempts to represent the act of listening.¹⁵ Pliny refers to the touching of the ear (*aurem ... tactum*) to denote this act, which is not surprising since it is a natural human action.¹⁶ It is not implausible that this gesture retained its currency into the medieval period, especially since there are two signing systems known from Anglo-Saxon England, at least one of which had its roots in the ancient world.¹⁷

Although the Anglo-Saxon manuscript thus offers one little help in visualizing a slave, one might at least hope that the French manuscript might be drawn upon to provide medieval illustrations of slaves, especially since the playwright Terence, himself allegedly once enslaved by the Romans, used slaves as characters in his plays. The illustrations may indeed be said to be medieval in that they were drawn in the ninth century, employing what Dodwell describes as 'the sketchy impressionistic style that was then in vogue in the Reims area'.¹⁸ This is not, however, the same as suggesting that the drawings depict *medieval* slaves. Quite the contrary, in fact, as there is no question that this manuscript has a close relationship to a Vatican manuscript of Terence,¹⁹ which Dodwell has argued from the hairstyles and clothes of the actors depicted must date back to the middle of the third century AD. If one examines the reproduction of the countenance of Laches in Dodwell's book, for instance, one will readily discern that he has a grotesque face. It is a graphic representation of a mask customarily worn by the actors.²⁰ This is even clearer in the Vatican manuscript, which contains what purports to be a portrait of Terence flanked by two actors whose masks are unambiguous.²¹ These illustrations thus *do* provide a representation of slaves but only as they appeared in the dramatic productions of the third century rather than as they were perceived in the Middle Ages.

The slavery of Anglo-Saxon England was largely, though not exclusively, agrarian slavery²² and one thing that the sources indicate quite frequently is that in the late tenth and eleventh centuries (if not before) many slaves were employed as ploughmen. With some pleasure, therefore, one lights on an illustration from London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B v, Part 1, that shows on fol.3r a ploughman representing the month of January, one of a series of pictures illustrating the calendar (Figure 2).²³ Followed by a man sowing seed, the ploughman appears to be preceded by a boy (indicated by his smaller size) carrying some sort of whip or goad. This nicely confirms the image of the ploughman that is verbally depicted in a schoolbook called the *Colloquy*, which was written around the year 1000 by Ælfric, abbot of the

monastery of Eynsham in Oxfordshire, for the purpose of teaching Latin vocabulary.²⁴ Ælfric mentions a boy, hoarse from yelling at the plough-beasts, who accompanies the ploughman. The work was evidently a success as someone else provided it with a continuous gloss in Old English as a kind of crib, presumably for teachers who were not too sure of their grasp of the Latin. Even if one grants that not all Anglo-Saxon ploughmen were slaves, here at last one might seem to have some firm evidence of what an Anglo-Saxon slave may have looked like. Closer consideration will reveal that unfortunately this too is a misapprehension. Art historians consider that, like the Paris Terence, the source of the illustrations in the manuscript may ultimately derive from Reims.

But at least, one might assert, here is a genuine image of a *medieval* slave, even if not an Anglo-Saxon one. Well, perhaps not. A close examination of the picture will show that it is impossible to determine the relationship between the oxen and the plough. Evidently this is not a drawing from life because the artist has not understood how oxen are yoked to a plough. In any case, Anglo-Saxon evidence suggests that plough-teams customarily consisted of at least six, and more usually, eight, oxen.²⁵ Recent analysis of a ploughing scene from a Salzburg manuscript by C.I. Hammer suggests that instead the picture had its roots in a Late Antique illustration.²⁶ A mosaic from St-Romain-en-Gal (Département Rhône) in southern France, now housed in the Louvre, provides an analogous depiction of a plough scene. Admittedly it does not show a wheeled plough and has only two oxen,²⁷ but the team has a figure to its left as in the Anglo-Saxon drawing, which in this case may possibly be a sower.²⁸ Since wheeled ploughs were known in the first century AD, as the elder Pliny indicates,²⁹ one may suspect, therefore, that the picture in the Tiberius manuscript is once more an illustration whose source lies in Late Antiquity, having been extracted from some cycle that sought to represent the seasons. Its provenance is thus too unreliable to be used as information about an Anglo-Saxon ploughman.



FIGURE 2
LABOURS OF THE MONTHS: JANUARY – PLOUGHING

These examples thus provide a salutary warning to be extremely circumspect in seeking to use medieval illustrative material to answer questions not directly related to art history. Since the apparent evidence about medieval slaves in artistic representations can be a snare and a delusion, one is driven to return to more conventional evidence about the medieval past, namely, written texts, and within those the verbal images that they provide about slaves. Here just two texts will be examined. The first is a riddle contained within the so-called Exeter Book, a manuscript dating from around the year 1000 and bequeathed to Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofstan in 1072, where, miraculously, it still resides. The second is a poem written in Old Icelandic that survives in a frustratingly incomplete form in a manuscript of about 1350. Both are clearly meant to be humorous – but humour is often expressed at the expense of people perceived to be lacking in power, as is the case here. It pains me, therefore, to say that the two texts in question need to be taken seriously.

The Anglo-Saxon riddles are vernacular texts that often have mundane and everyday objects as their solutions. Several thrive on an obscene double entendre, such as the one that refers to the key that hangs on someone's belt.³⁰ It would be a mistake, however, to regard them as the literature of the 'common people'. The vernacular riddles had learned Latin antecedents³¹ – and learned Anglo-Saxons, who were mostly clerics, themselves were not devoid of humour.³²

A good example that is relevant to this study is the Exeter Book riddle that has an ox as its solution.³³ Mackie's translation (with a minor amendment) goes as follows:

I walk upon my feet, and tear up the ground,
The green fields, as long as I have life.
If life is taken from me, I bind fast
The dark Welsh, and sometimes better men. [In other words, bonds made from leather thongs.]
Sometimes I give a brave man drink from my bosom [a reference to a leather drinking bottle, perhaps], sometimes a very proud bride
Treads on me with her feet [i.e., she is wearing leather shoes].
Sometimes a dark-haired Welsh-woman,
Brought from afar, a foolish drunken slave-woman
On dark nights lifts and presses me,
Wets me in water, sometimes warms me
Well at the fire [presumably this refers to the cleaning of muddy leather shoes but it may also refer to the grooming of a cow by a *dæge* or dairymaid, who seems frequently to have been a slave], (she) sticks into my

bosom

Her wanton hand, turns me around often,

Sweeps across my blackness [a glove is being alluded to but we are clearly also meant to catch the obscene import of the four previous lines: the word *swifeth* 'sweeps' may be cognate with the Chaucerian *swive* 'to have sexual intercourse', ³⁴ and *hygegalan* 'wanton' certainly has sexual connotations since *gal* means 'lust']. Say what I am called, Who when living despoil the land

And after death serve men.³⁵

The text uses two variants of a word of ambiguous meaning, the plural *wealas* and the female singular *wale*. This word provides a foretaste of the semantic development of the widely used modern word 'slave', which is derived from 'Slav'.³⁶ A *wealh*, which originally meant a foreigner, came to denote a Welsh person.³⁷ By the time this poem was copied around the year 1000 it also meant a slave. Poetry thrives on ambiguity and there is no reason why both 'Welsh' and 'slave' should not be applicable here.

What should especially be noted is that the Welsh slave woman is portrayed as both sexually aggressive and drunk. Slavery tends to be an unstable institution, maintained mostly by force or by the threat of force. The sexual fears of the subjugator are often directed at the slave, so that the latter is seen as aggressive, potent, sexually threatening. And while the joys of the mead hall are celebrated in Anglo-Saxon poetry, drinking was a male occupation. If present at all, a woman in such an environment was there to serve the liquor, as in the Old English heroic poem, *Beowulf*, where King Hrothgar's wife hands round the mead-cup.³⁸ This riddle contains the only instance in Anglo-Saxon poetry of a woman who is described as drunk. Like her sexual aggression, her drunkenness is a mark of her slave status. This slave status is also indicated by her hair colour. A couple of other riddles associate darkness either with being a Celt (a 'dark-haired Celt' appears in Riddle 52)³⁹ or with lower social status: Riddle 49 mentions 'the dark servant, swarthy and dark-faced',⁴⁰ a contrast to another riddle,⁴¹ which describes an upper-class woman in the following terms:

Sometimes a lady,

Fair-haired, the daughter of an earl,

Lays hand on me, though she is noble.

Students of more modern forms of slavery will recognize the same defensiveness with which slavery is justified: slaves are described in physical terms that are considered ugly by the dominant culture and as having a deplorable moral character.

At first glance the *Rígsthula* may be considered to be more benign.⁴² The poem is a carefully crafted work in which a god who calls himself Rígr visits a

succession of couples who are described in generational and sociolegal terms. First he comes to Great-grandfather and Great-grandmother (Ái and Edda) and spends three nights sleeping between them in bed. Nine months later is born Thrall (the Old Norse and late northern Anglo-Saxon word for a 'slave'). Thrall in turn fathers other children. Next Rígr visits Grandfather and Grandmother (Afi and Amma) and again spends three nights. Nine months later is born Karl (the Old Norse cognate of the modern English word 'churl') Then Rígr spends three nights with Mother and Father. Nine months later the result is Jarl or 'Earl'. The youngest of Jarl's offspring is a noble young person, 'Konr ungr', which is clearly an attempt to represent *konungr* or king. Unfortunately the leaf that would have described King is missing.

Interestingly the poem also displays the same use of physical characteristics to describe these classes of people as in the Old English riddles. Karl is red-haired, whereas Jarl is blond. Though a crucial part of Thrall's description is defective, U. Dronke suggests Great-grandmother's baby is described as a 'black-skinned boy'; as an adult:

There was on his hands
wrinkled skin,
gnarled knuckles
[scabbed nails],
fingers thick—
face unlovely,
bent back,
long heels.

In due course he meets someone who becomes his partner:

There came to the homestead
a gadabout girl.
Soil was on the soles of her feet,
her arm sunburnt,
down-curving her nose –
her name, she said, was Thrallwoman.

Though they are not described as marrying, in general their characters are not impugned, unlike in the Old English riddle. Instead they are disparaged through the names of their children, to whom two stanzas are devoted:

Children they bred,
had a home and were happy.
I think they were called
Bawler and Byreboy,
Clump and Clegg,

Bedmate, Stinker,
Stump, Stout,
Sluggish and Grizzled,
Stooper and Longleg....

The daughters were Stumpy and Dumpy,
Bulgingcalves And Eaglenose,
Shouter and Servingmaid,
Greatgossip,
Tatteredcoat and Craneshanks.
From there have come
the generation of thralls.

The date and provenance of this poem have occasioned much debate amongst scholars. P. Foote and D.M. Wilson favour a tenth-century date.⁴³ B. and P. Sawyer, on the other hand, argue that it fits the historical circumstances of thirteenth-century Scandinavia.⁴⁴ I am disposed to accept, in part on philological grounds, Dronke's carefully considered ascription of the poem to early eleventh-century England.⁴⁵ Dronke points out that Ólafr Sigtrygsson, who was successively king of Dublin and king of York at points between 938 and 952, was called in the Irish Annals *rí*, the Irish word for king. The adoption of the name *Rígr* for the god, not elsewhere mentioned in Norse literature, suggests a culture in contact with Ireland.⁴⁶ The interest in social differentiation is also an Irish characteristic, which is so clearly to be seen in the Irish law tract on status, *Crith Gablach*.⁴⁷ Someone familiar with both Ireland and England would have found the Irish interest in social differentiation reinforced by developments in Anglo-Saxon thought. From the time of Alfred on there had been among some Anglo-Saxon writers a strong interest in a tripartite classification of society, divided into those who work (*laboratores*), those who fight (*bellatores*) and those who pray (*oratores*).⁴⁸ The text also displays the influence of the English language. The word used by the poet for Frankish *spears*, *frokkr*, is a word occurring only here in Old Norse but can be found in the Old English word *francas*. The Old Norse word *karta* is rare: it was probably borrowed from Old English *cræt*, the metathesized form of which survives in modern English 'cart'.⁴⁹ Dronke suggests that it was composed in northern England (evidently she means in or near York). A place like Chester, from which one could sail directly by river and sea over to Ireland, is another possibility. It should be noted that this is not the only piece of Norse poetry composed in England that was to survive in later Icelandic sources: one need only think of the so-called *Höfuthlausn* ('Head-ransom'), the poem Egill Skallagrímsson composed overnight to save his head when he fell into the hands of Eric Bloodaxe, and which today survives imbedded in *Egilssaga*.

It might be overstraining the evidence to link the racism and sense of

superiority of these two poems with the attitudes displayed by so many British abroad when managing the empire in the nineteenth century, though the association of the colour black with evil in Western culture is already evident in Anglo-Saxon literature and in the twelfth century the English were certainly starting to disparage the 'barbarian' Celtic-speaking peoples of the British Isles, ironically, in part, because the latter were still slave-owners as the English had been not long before.⁵⁰ But rather than pursue this line of thought, we might instead consider how these two works show that medieval slavery should not be regarded as a benign institution just because many slaves led the day-to-day existence of agrarian workers rather than being employed in chain-gangs or because we have little information about how the slaves themselves felt about their condition. Certainly, contemporaries did not regard being a slave as an enviable status. When Ælfric composed his portrayal of the ploughman in his *Colloquy* he has his ploughman cry out: 'Oh! Oh! The work is hard. Yes, the work is hard, because I am not free.'⁵¹

Slavery was not to survive in Britain and Scandinavia for more than a few more centuries after these works were composed.⁵² The images of agrarian slaves that have been examined here display the casual cruelty of disparagement and abuse. This in itself will resonate with those studying slavery in other places and other times. But lest the Middle Ages seem to students of more recent slavery not to have much more than this to say to them, we might conclude with an image that both transports one well beyond the horizons of Western Europe and takes one chronologically right up to the boundaries of the modern era. It will serve as a reminder that slaves can also be used as an image of power and of status. And it will call to attention the Islamic realms, which nurtured and encouraged the growth of major routes for the transporting of slaves. In Europe some of these routes passed through the Slavic lands bordering the river systems of Russia and in Africa they ranged from West Africa via the oases of the Sahara to the lands of the eastern Mediterranean and into the heart of the world of Islam.⁵³

In the fourteenth century, *Mansa Musa I*, king of Mali (1312–27), arrived in Cairo en route to Mecca at the head of an entourage of 500 slaves, each carrying a gold staff weighing four pounds.⁵⁴ Musa's motivation in travelling in state like this was undoubtedly prestige; he could hardly be called a modern capitalist. And yet I think he would have understood both the fascination gold held (until very recently) for capitalists and also their drive to acquire great wealth through the use of cheap labour. Gold and slaves: two of the great motivators of the exploration of Africa and the Americas....

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2. For the Viking period see P. Holm, 'The Slave Trade of Dublin, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries', *Peritia*, 5 (1986), pp.317–45.
3. T. Iversen, *Trelldommen: norsk slaveri i middelalderen* ([Bergen]: Historisk institutt, Universitetet i Bergen, 1997) (German translation forthcoming); S.A. Epstein, *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), a work which I have not yet had the opportunity to examine.
4. Finley attempted to describe and develop a methodology for comparing different kinds of slavery in the Ancient World. See M.I. Finley, 'The Servile Statuses of Ancient Greece', *Revue internationale des droits de l'antiquité*, 3e série, 7 (1960), pp. 165–89; Finley, 'Between Slavery and Freedom', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 6 (1963–4), pp.233–49.
5. C. Wickham, 'Problems of Comparing Rural Societies in Early Medieval Western Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series, 2 (1992), pp.221–46.
6. H. Grieser's *Sklaverei im spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Gallien (5.-7. Jh.)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997) is a rare example of a work on slavery that bridges the conventional ancient-medieval historical divide.
7. For an introduction see J. Goody, 'Slavery in Time and Space' in J.L. Watson (ed.), *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp. 16–42.
8. See H. Thomas, *The Slave Trade. The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440–1870* (London: Picador, 1997; corrected reprint, Papermac, 1998), Ch.3. There may be studies in the Slavic languages or in Arabic but any such work will not be generally accessible to most historians of slavery who live outside the countries where these languages are spoken.
9. London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B iv. Temple suggests that it dates from the second quarter of the eleventh century and notes: 'The scenes of the Israelites' everyday life ... may be the outcome of the artist's immediate experience': E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066* (London: Harvey Miller, 1976), no.86, pp. 102–4.
10. For the text and translation, see C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Gestures and the Roman Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.104 and n.10.
11. *Ibid.*, pp.102–11.
12. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 7899.
13. L.W. Jones and C.R. Morey, *The Miniatures of the Manuscripts of Terence Prior to the Thirteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1931), Vol.2, pp.63–6. Dodwell notes that the great expert on ninth-century manuscripts, Bernhard Bischoff, agreed with this attribution in a personal letter to him of 8 April 1978: Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Gestures*, p.37 n.19.
14. *Ibid.*, p.66.
15. I gratefully acknowledge my debt to Professor Ingomar Weiler for this interpretation.
16. H. Aigner, 'Testes per aures tracti und Plinius n. h. XI 45, 251', *Zeitschrift des historischen Vereines für Steiermark* (1976), pp.221–5.
17. N.F. Barley, 'Two Anglo-Saxon Sign Systems Compared', *Semiotica*, 12 (1974), pp.227–37.
18. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Gestures*, pp.37–8.
19. How close is a matter for debate: Jones and Morey (*The Miniatures of the Manuscripts of Terence*, Vol.2, p.56 and cf. Vol.2, p.66) regard them as deriving from the same archetype; J.N. Grant sees them as more distantly related: *Studies in the Textual Tradition of Terence* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1986), ch.5, pp. 136–54.
20. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Gestures*, plate XXIIa.
21. *Ibid.*, plate I.

22. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England*, *passim*.
23. The manuscript is dated to the second quarter of the eleventh century and may come from Winchester according to Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, no.87, p. 104. She considers that it might possibly be derived from London, British Library, MS Cotton Julius A vi, an early-eleventh-century manuscript, perhaps from Christ Church, Canterbury (*ibid.*, no.62, p.80), or else that they used a common source.
24. G.N. Garmonsway (ed.), *Ælfric's Colloquy*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1947).
25. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England*, pp.200–1.
26. C.I. Hammer, *Charlemagne's Months and their Bavarian Labors* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1997), p.21. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon examples, it represents Charlemagne's so-called 'fallow' month of June.
27. For a picture of the mosaic, see K.D. White, *Farm Equipment of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.1.14b. As White points out, the ploughman is directing his team with a long goad (*stimulus*), which was a straight stick with a spike embedded at one end.
28. I owe the suggestion to my wife, Helen Rowett.
29. K.D. White, *Agricultural Implements of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp.134 and 141–5. According to Pliny, *Natural History* 18.172 the plough, which had two small wheels, was invented in the Raetian area of Gaul (now known as the Grisons, in east Switzerland).
30. W.S. Mackie (ed.), *The Exeter Book. Part II: Poems IX-XXXII* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), no.44. The riddle is no.42 in C. Williamson (ed.), *The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977). The numbers in both editions will be provided for ease of reference.
31. *Ibid.*, p.24.
32. J. Milcox (ed.), *Humour in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2000).
33. Mackie, *Exeter Book. Part II*, no.12; Williamson, *Old English Riddles*, no.10.
34. In Middle English the verb *swiven* only seems to come into use in the works of Chaucer: H. Kurath et al. (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1954–), part S.18 (1992), p. 1253. The noun *swiving* in the sense of 'sexual intercourse, copulation' is attested, however, in a text that probably dates from 1265 AD preserved in London, British Library, MS Harley 2253, called by its editor 'The Song of the Battle of Lewes': C. Brown (ed.), *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), no.72, p. 131, line 9. It is not unusual for words with a strongly sexual connotation to have a lengthy *sub rosa* existence before they are attested in a written source.
35. Mackie, *Exeter Book. Part II*, pp.101, 103.
36. C. Verlinden, 'L'Origine de *sclavus* = esclave', *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi*, 17 (1942), pp.97–128, with supplementary information in Annexe 1: 'Encore sur les origines de *sclavus* = esclave' in Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, Vol.2, pp.999–1010.
37. M.L. Faull, 'The Semantic Development of Old English *Wealh*' *Leeds Studies in English*, new series 8 (1975), pp.20–44.
38. *Wealththeow* herself might have been a slave: see Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England*, p.53 and references there cited. The incident is placed in its social context in an insightful article by M.J. Enright, *Lady with a Mead Cup: Ritual, Prophecy and Lordship in the European Warband from La Tène to the Viking Age* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), pp. 1–37. I am reluctant, however, to follow him in arguing that the name had ancient associations with cultic service: see *ibid.*, pp. 189–95.
39. Mackie, *Exeter Book. Part II*, no.52; Williamson, *Old English Riddles*, no.50.
40. Mackie, *Exeter Book. Part II*, no.49; Williamson, *Old English Riddles*, no.47.
41. Mackie, *Exeter Book. Part II*, no.79; Williamson, *Old English Riddles*, no.76.
42. U. Dronke (ed. with translation, introduction and commentary), *The Poetic Edda. Vol.2: Mythological Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). The poem and translation appear on pp. 162–73.
43. P. Foote and D.M. Wilson, *The Viking Achievement: The Society and Culture of Early Medieval Scandinavia* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson 1970, reprinted with supplement, 1979), p.65.
44. *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation, circa 800–1500* (Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 142–3.
45. Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, Vol.2, p.203.
46. See also T.D. Hill, 'Rígsthula: Some Medieval Christian Analogues', *Speculum*, 61 (1986), pp.79–89, esp. p.88.

47. D.A. Binchy (ed.), *Críth Gablach* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1941); see also T. Charles-Edwards, 'Críth Gablach and the Law of Status', *Peritia*, 3 (1986), pp.53–73.
48. For the latest review, see T.E. Powell, 'The "Three Orders" of Society in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 23 (1994), pp. 103–32. See also J. le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp.53–7 and 296–300; D. Iogna-Prat, *Ordonner et exclure: Cluny et la société chrétienne face à l'hérésie, au judaïsme et à l'islam 1000–1150* (Paris: Aubier, 1998), pp.23–4, where he seeks to trace the sources of the idea back into the late Roman period through Hrabanus Maurus and Isidore of Seville to Servius. Like Hill, 'Rígsthula', p.89 n.21, I am not convinced by Dumézil's arguments about the Indo-European antiquity of the material in the *Rígsthula*: 'La Rigspula et la structure sociale indo-européenne', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 154 (1958), pp. 1–9, English version G. Dumézil, *Gods of the Ancient Northmen*, ed. E. Haugen (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, and London: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 118–25.
49. See Dronke (ed.), *The Poetic Edda*, Vol.2, commentary, 36/8 and 22/7, 8 respectively.
50. For examples of the pejorative connotations of black, see Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England*, p.52 and nn.10–13. J. Gillingham has an insightful analysis of the growth of English concepts of superiority in the twelfth century in 'Conquering the Barbarians: War and Chivalry in Twelfth Century Britain', *The Haskins Society Journal*, 4 (1992), pp.67–84, also in *The English in the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), pp.41–58, esp. p.43 and cf. pp.27–9.
51. Garmonsway, *Ælfric's Colloquy*, p.21, line 35 (the translation is mine).
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53. For Islamic slavery see B. Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). W.D. Phillips, Jr., is not unusual in downplaying the role of the Islamic realms in perpetuating the continuity of slavery: see his 'Continuity and Change in Western Slavery: Ancient to Modern Times', in M.L. Bush (ed.), *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage* (London and New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996), pp.71–88. R. Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves: The History of Africa's Other Black Diaspora* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; and London: Atlantic Books, 2001).
54. T. Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa 1876–1912* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991), p.16. For further details of his *hadj* of 1324, see Thomas, *The Slave Trade*, pp.43–4 and cf. pp.50–1. Musa I is placed in his historical context by N. Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali* (London: Methuen, 1973; reprinted with new bibliography, New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1980), where references to the primary sources are provided. One must also allow for the possibility that the slave numbers have been exaggerated: Levtzion points out (p.253 n.52) that the numbers of his followers vary in the sources from 8,000 to 60,000. For the dates of his reign, see idem, 'The Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Kings of Mali', *Journal of African History*, 4 (1963), pp.341–53, at pp.349–50.

NORTH AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN SLAVERY

‘Arms Like Polished Iron’: The Black Slave Body in Narratives of a Slave Ship Revolt

CELESTE-MARIE BERNIER

A black man, with woolly head, high cheekbones, protruding lip, distended nostril, and retreating forehead.¹

[He] was of manly form.... His torn sleeves disclosed arms like polished iron.... His whole appearance betokened Herculean strength.²

Born of African parentage, with no mixture in his blood, he was one of the handsomest of his race.³

He had a manly air, his motions were easy and dignified, and altogether he looked like a being that would never consent to wear a chain.⁴

[He] was an unmixed African, of grand physique.... His dignified, calm and unaffected bearing marked him as a leader among his fellows.⁵

These quotations introduce a plethora of questions concerning representations of the black slave body. Who do these extracts describe and do they all refer to the same person? Are they written by the same author? If not, which came first and what relationship do they bear to each other? For which audience are they intended? Were they written for different audiences during different periods? When were they written? How and where were they published? What was their political motivation? How successful were they? Are they historically accurate? This research investigates the leader of the *Creole* revolt, Madison Washington, and his wife Susan, in order to consider the competing narrative strategies employed by these authors in representations of the black male and female slave body.

Their opening quotations to this article all describe Madison Washington and show the extent to which representations of the same figure vary within and across the works of different authors. The first two excerpts are selected from Frederick Douglass's antebellum texts on this revolt and confirm his differing evocation of the black male figure. The translation of Madison Washington from a 'black man' with 'woolly head' to a 'Herculean' figure of 'polished iron' reflects Douglass's concern with form and context. While in the second instance, he sought to convince a white readership of black heroism in

references to a classical model, in the first he employed stereotypes to suggest a black revolutionary tradition for the education of an all-black audience.

These extracts also demonstrate the different narrative techniques employed by each subsequent writer. The third excerpt is drawn from post-Civil War material by William Wells Brown which targets a black audience with an overtly separatist agenda, as confirmed by references to 'no mixture in his blood'. Written during the same period as Brown's text, the fourth extract, by white female abolitionist Lydia Maria Child, eulogizes black masculinity ('a manly air') in a focus upon individual potential to secure emancipation: 'a being that would never consent to wear a chain'. The last quotation, drawn from Pauline Hopkins's twentieth-century version, intertwines Brown's privileging of separate racial origins ('an unmixed African') with Child's description of an invincible black male body ('grand physique'). Added to this, Hopkins emphasizes Washington's qualities as a 'leader' and confirms his significance within the wider black community. Above all, an analysis of representations of the black male and female slave body within and across these versions confirms the dynamic interaction between thematic content and historical/literary context. This contribution discusses each writer in turn in order to compare their various representations of black male and female slave physicality. This approach explores the complex relationship between literary and historical constructions of the black slave body and their immediate context consisting of authors, texts and audience.

The available historical material on the *Creole* revolt contextualizes the relationship between contemporary representations of the black slave body and subsequent adaptations produced by Douglass, Brown, Child and Hopkins. In brief terms, the history of this slave ship mutiny offers the following 'facts'. According to the testimony of the officers and crew provided in the *Senate Documents*, this revolt was led by the 'head cook of the slaves', Madison Washington, the subject for debates concerning black male slave heroism in these versions.⁶ Just off the coast of Virginia on the night of 7 November 1841, the 'mutineers and murderers' or 'immortal nineteen' successfully rose up against the white crew on the ship's journey from Hampton Roads to a slave auction in New Orleans.⁷ The ship was 'laden with manufactured tobacco, in boxes, and slaves' and under the command of Captain Robert Ensor.⁸ In order to defend themselves against charges of negligence, crew members were keen to establish that on departure in October 1841, the 'vessel ... was tight and strong, well manned ... and equipped for carrying slaves'.⁹ Their depositions clearly stated that male and female slaves were separated and no allusion is made to the existence of Susan Washington as introduced by these four authors. In total, there were 135 slaves on board, eight crew members, five sailors and six white passengers.

Near Abaco in the West Indies, the brig was 'laid to' and it was discovered that Madison Washington, owned by Thomas McCargo and described in generic terms as 'a very large and strong slave', had 'gone aft among the

women'.¹⁰ The first mate, Zephaniah Gifford and a passenger in charge of the slaves, William Henry Merritt, went down to the hold. On finding Washington there, Merritt interjected: 'Is it possible that you are down here! You are the last man on board of the brig I expected to find here.'¹¹ Displaying his heroism, Washington easily overpowered white opposition in both a defiant use of language and superlative physical prowess: "Yes, sir, it is me," and instantly jumped to the hatchway, and got on deck, saying, "I am going up, I cannot stay here": he did so in spite of ... resistance.'¹² The 'official' testimony dramatizes the revolt in the following manner:

Madison then ran forward, and Elijah Morris fired a pistol, the ball of which grazed the back part of Mr Gifford's head. Madison then shouted, 'We have commenced, and must go through; rush, boys, rush aft; we have got them now': calling to the slaves below, he said, 'Come up every damned one of you; if you don't and lend a hand, I will kill you all and throw you overboard.'¹³

This excerpt questions the 'objectivity' of the white historical record, both in terms of representations of black male heroism and prejudices against the legitimacy of slave insurrection. Madison Washington's central role in the mutiny and the importance of male rebels as he calls upon the 'boys' for aid is acknowledged in this extract. However, any endorsement of black revolutionary male slave heroism is ultimately withheld. It is, perhaps, more useful to equate the black male figure with senseless insurrectionary violence, which is confirmed in Washington's warning to the slaves, 'if you don't lend a hand, I will kill you all'. The black leader's threat is included to emphasize disintegration within the ship's black community and to strip the revolt of any potential audience identification in ideological justification.

Upon gaining control of the ship, the slaves' actions were characterized by a magnanimous impulse: only one crew member was killed. All literary-historical adaptations of this revolt, with the exception of material by Hopkins, present black violence in a comparably abbreviated and equivocal form. The slaves succeeded in changing the ship's course to Nassau, New Providence, in the Bahamas with the result that, upon arrival, all 135 were freed by the British authorities. This sparked a furious exchange between Daniel Webster, Secretary of State for the United States, and the British government.¹⁴ Their correspondence demonstrated that a key bone of contention was the United States' sense of enslavement to British tyrannical rule. However, any attempt to conflate their identity with that of their own slaves proved ultimately impractical due to a racist code of white Southern honour. As a result, during negotiations the spectre of war in defence of Southern honour became a tangible reality. However, any illusion of British superior morality was quickly undermined by an Anglo-American Claims Commission's decision to award compensation in the amount of \$110,330 in 1855 to 'the owners of the liberated slaves, thereby vindicating the Southern position ... in the controversy'.¹⁵

The descriptions of Madison Washington in newspapers and the periodical press confirm the existence of established conventions for representing the black slave body, against and within which all four writers produced their material. These texts also raise political questions by indicating his varied position within pro/anti-slavery discourse. The case of the *Amistad* having established a precedent for media interest in 1839, the *Creole* sustained much attention.¹⁶ William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator* published many reports, the most interesting of which include 'Madison Washington: Another Chapter in his History' (1842) and 'The Creoles – Strike for Liberty! – The Hero Mutineers' (1842).¹⁷ Both articles dramatize black male physical resistance, while directing audience attention to the humanity and moral awareness they hold in common with white men. In particular, the content and style of 'The Creoles – Strike for Liberty!' (1842) is closely followed by subsequent writers: they stress Madison Washington's heroism and his concern for others, and also interpret slave resistance as a brave bid for freedom.¹⁸ These abolitionist interpretations operate in direct contrast to pro-slavery accounts which dramatize the revolt as a 'desperate affray'.¹⁹

The first known antebellum dramatization of this event by a black author is Frederick Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* (1853).²⁰ This text formed the largest contribution to an anti-slavery gift-book edited by Julia Griffiths, and provided the basis for Brown's, Child's and Hopkins's dramatizations of black male and female slave heroism.²¹ In a self-conscious manner, Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* challenged characteristic abolitionist tendencies towards using the slave's body as the sole marker of authenticity. He offered a critique of white interpretations which positioned the black male slave body as the most accurate measure of individual experience by emphasizing the additional importance of language in representations of black male consciousness. Douglass's structural composition of *The Heroic Slave* demonstrates the complex narrative processes by which he displays and (re)presents the black male body. Overall, he resists its straightforward appropriation as an object for consumption by a white audience by reclaiming the importance of the black male body as symbolic, rhetorical figure. He juxtaposes the physical spectacle of the slave with a superlative performance of black male intellectual prowess in Madison Washington's exemplary command of language.

While Madison is conventionally feminized in his rhetorical speech, 'I neither run nor fight, but do meanly stand, answering each heavy blow of a cruel master with doleful wails and piteous cries';²² upon his decision to have 'Liberty ... or die in the attempt to gain it',²³ his stature immediately assumes heroic and exaggeratedly 'masculine' dimensions: hence Douglass's introduction of Washington in sculptured proportions, emblematic of a classical model. Variouslly characterized throughout *The Heroic Slave* as 'our hero', the 'strong man' and 'a sort of general-in-chief among them [the slaves]',²⁴ Douglass's description of Washington reads:

Madison was of manly form. Tall, symmetrical, round, and strong.... His torn sleeves disclosed arms like polished iron. His face was 'black, but comely'. His eye, lit with emotion, kept guard under a brow as dark and as glossy as the raven's wing. His whole appearance betokened Herculean strength; yet there was nothing savage or forbidding in his aspect.... His broad mouth and nose spoke only of good nature and kindness. But his voice, that unfailing index of the soul, though full and melodious, had that in it which could terrify as well as charm.²⁵

Douglass's references to Hercules confirm Washington's statuesque and monumental significance, while his evocation of 'the raven's wing' communicates racial difference. Douglass's physical representations of the archetypal black male heroic figure in his written material on the *Creole* revolt, resist conventions of minstrelsy. His emphasis upon black physical prowess, 'arms like polished iron', is qualified by a preoccupation with rhetorical persuasion, as contained within Washington's 'full and melodious' voice, which undermine associations of black slave heroism with 'savagery'. Furthermore, Douglass's construction of the male slave figure contains conventionally feminized motifs. For example, such references as 'A child might play in his arms'²⁶ introduce maternal considerations in *The Heroic Slave*'s depiction of the black male slave model, which complicate any strict definitions of Douglass's narrative design as prescriptively masculine.

Douglass's descriptions of Washington throughout *The Heroic Slave* are in direct contrast to those provided in his speeches, including for example his earlier address, 'Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano' (1849). Given before a black audience in New York to protest against the American Colonization Society, this speech considers Washington's heroism along diametrically opposed lines: 'Suiting the action to the word ... in a very few minutes Madison Washington, a black man, with woolly head, high cheekbones, protruding lip, distended nostril, and retreating forehead, had the mastery of that ship.'²⁷ Upon first reading, it would appear that Douglass subscribes to the conventional markers for black representation provided by racist discourse and minstrelsy caricature: 'woolly head' and 'protruding lip'. However, he ultimately subverts white racist stereotypes as they are used positively in order to situate the black male body within an explicitly separatist framework. His use of an exaggerated, unambiguous and highly stylized form draws attention to debates surrounding Douglass's manipulation of theatricality, minstrelsy and varied positioning of audience. In contrast to *The Heroic Slave*, in which he seeks to convince a white readership of black equal manhood by ignoring racial difference, in his oratorical material Douglass celebrates the black male body even as represented by racist discourse, in order to produce generic black role models for a black audience. Indeed, the key phrase, 'suiting the action to the word', confirms Douglass's explicit connection between moral suasion and political activism, while it articulates his recognition of the necessity for practical

efforts by his black audience to secure emancipation.

Douglass's incorporation of the black female slave figure into *The Heroic Slave* is a source of much ambiguity and accounts for much of the critical controversy surrounding this text.²⁸ His explanation of Washington's return to the South to rescue his wife from slavery borrows heavily from contemporary speculation in the abolitionist press. Both *The Liberator's* 'Madison Washington: Another Chapter in His History' (1842) and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard's* similarly titled 'Madison Washington' (1842) focused upon the unnamed figure of Washington's wife as stimulus to black male rebellion. The first argued that 'This grave Creole matter may prove to have been but a part only of that grand game, in which the highest stake was the liberty of his dear wife', while the second summarized the public consequences of domestic relationships: 'We would give much to learn whether she was on board the Creole. It would be curious indeed, if this little sub-plot of domestic love should set in motion a great game of nations, with England and the United States for actors'.²⁹ This interest in the possible existence of Washington's wife not only encourages sensationalism by adding romance to an already adventurous tale but also confirms abolitionist preoccupations with domesticity and their interests in convincing a white audience concerning the sanctity of the black domestic unit and the extent of its violation by slavery.

Thus, Douglass extends the evident preoccupation in the abolitionist press with writing Washington's wife into the historical record by naming her into being in *The Heroic Slave* as Susan Washington. He characterizes her in passive terms: as the black hero's 'Poor thing!', 'my good angel' and 'my poor wife, whom [*sic*] I knew might be trusted with my secrets even on the scaffold'.³⁰ The fact of Douglass's authorship confirms the significance of this text for documenting black male narrative strategies for representing the black female body. Thus, Washington's account to the white abolitionist Listwell of his failed rescue attempt betrays Douglass's ideological emphasis:

My wife ... screamed and fainted ... the white folks were roused.... It was all over with me now! ... Seeing that we gave no heed to their calls, they fired, and my poor wife fell by my side dead, while I received but a slight flesh wound. I now became desperate, and stood my ground, and awaited their attack over her dead body.³¹

The preferred critical interpretation of this moment argues for the invincibility of the black male body, set against the vulnerability of the black female slave.³² However, it is possible to argue in support of the different view that Susan Washington's body facilitates Madison's physical liberation in this text. *The Heroic Slave* offers a clear discrepancy between Susan as Madison's property, 'my poor wife', and authorial interest in the symbolic importance of the black female slave's body, 'her dead body'. Douglass questions and extends the available conventions within which black male and female slave bodies are presented and defined. There is no doubt that revisions of Douglass's

representations of the black female slave form the point of departure for Brown's, Child's and Hopkins's texts on the *Creole* revolt. Their exploration and adaptation of the literary plight of the 'tragic mulatta' facilitate an innovative variation upon the established abolitionist template from which to consider black male slave heroism.

The task of establishing an authoritative text from William Wells Brown's different versions of this revolt is far from straightforward. His first version, 'Madison Washington', appeared in 1861 and in its similarity of title confirmed an intertextual relationship with Lydia Maria Child. The piece was 'written for' *The Pine and Palm*, edited by James Redpath and included as one of the exemplary black biographies in the magazine's 'Celebrated Colored Americans Series'.³³ Published two years prior to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, Brown's immediate aim for this piece reflected an anti-slavery agenda reminiscent of Douglass's narrative design in *The Heroic Slave*. He encouraged his white audience to accept black equal humanity by producing literary-historical representations of black male legendary heroism. With one or two minor changes, Brown's periodical piece, 'Madison Washington', was then published as part of his first volume of black history entitled *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius and His Achievements* (1863). Dedicated to 'the advocates and friends of negro freedom and equality', this text was a pioneering work of black historical scholarship.³⁴

Brown's postbellum version of the *Creole* revolt situates Washington as black heroic exemplar within a black historical tradition for the education of a black audience. The main adaptation by Brown under discussion in this essay is his post-emancipation text, 'Slave Revolt at Sea' (1867). This short work includes additional material which engages with a racist denial of black heroism, while also confirming his intertextual relationship with Hopkins.³⁵ In terms of publication origin, 'Slave Revolt at Sea' was included as one of many slave insurrections recounted in the early chapters of his second volume of black history as testimony to black male slave heroism.³⁶ Furthermore, Brown's narrative representations of Washington echo those found in Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*:

[His] tall figure, firm step, and piercing eye attracted at once the attention of all who beheld him. Nature had treated him as a favorite. His expressive countenance painted and reflected every emotion of his soul. There was a fascination in the gaze of his finely cut eyes that no one could withstand. Born of African parentage, with no mixture in his blood, he was one of the handsomest of his race. His dignified, calm, and unaffected features announced at a glance that he was endowed with genius, and create to guide his fellow-men. He called himself Madison Washington, and said that his birthplace was in the 'Old Dominion'.³⁷

This excerpt confirms the centrality of similar qualities for the black heroic figure: thus, Douglass's Washington is also endowed with an 'expressive

countenance'³⁸ and is equally preoccupied with establishing his connections by birth to the 'Old Dominion'. Both authors represent the male slave as a prepossessing figure of exceptional heroism: while for Brown he is 'created to guide his fellow-men', Douglass commends the fact that 'He had the head to conceive, and the hand to execute'.³⁹ In this manner, Madison Washington functions in historical and literary terms as both an exemplary and representative black heroic figure.

However, it can be argued that a highly significant revision is presented by Brown's emphasis upon Washington's 'African parentage, with no mixture in his blood'. The fact that he unambiguously traces the black heroic figure's racial lineage operates in marked contrast to Douglass's vague and aestheticized allusions to Washington's racial identity. The latter is described obliquely in religious references, 'black, but comely', and in romanticized terms by an evocation of animal imagery, 'brow as dark and as glossy as the raven's wing'. 'Overall, Douglass's displacing of the primacy of Washington's racial heritage reflects his desire to emphasize similarity by minimizing the differences between his black protagonist and white audience. Thus, he situates Washington within a tradition of white Virginian heroism: he is 'one of the truest, manliest, and bravest of her [Virginia's] children'.⁴⁰ In contrast, 'Slave Revolt at Sea' confirms Washington's representative status for his black audience as a black hero, an 'uncouth son of Africa far above his Anglo-Saxon oppressors'.⁴¹ Clearly, Brown celebrates difference and demarcates revolutionary heroism according to racial inheritance in order to invert conventional hierarchies. In evidence of some similarities, both texts focus upon natural imagery to emphasize the heroic male slave's articulation of a romantic 'natural rights' philosophy. Thus in 'Slave Revolt at Sea' Washington records that 'The birds in the trees and the wild beasts of the forest made me feel that I, like them, ought to be free',⁴² while in *The Heroic Slave* Douglass's hero proclaims: Those birds ... are still my superiors. They *live free*, though they may die slaves.⁴³ Both examples manifest an identical preoccupation with the interdependence of black male equal humanity and rhetorical and dramatic language.

Brown's 'Slave Revolt at Sea' fundamentally revises Douglass's dramatization of oblique connections between the black male body and violence in *The Heroic Slave*. His more graphic account confirms the fact that he takes full advantage of a later, post-abolitionist historical and literary context. Douglass introduces a dialogue between two white sailors as a strategy to convey black insurrection indirectly: 'The nineteen negroes were all on deck, with their broken fetters in their hands, rushing in all directions.'⁴⁴ This technique illustrates his preference for concentrating upon Washington's rhetorical justification: 'We have done that which you applaud your fathers for doing, and if we are murderers, *so were they*.'⁴⁵ In direct contrast, Brown privileges violent process: 'The heroic slave did not yield until he with a club had laid three of his assailants upon the ground with his manly blows; and not

then until weakened by loss of blood.⁴⁶ Significantly forestalling Hopkins's interest in Washington's generic status as the 'intrepid leader' and 'the Negro',⁴⁷ Brown's consideration of the 'heroic slave' in this extract underscores Washington's importance as a revised archetypal role model in an explicit commitment to violence. His refusal to surrender until overpowered confirms the interdependence between ideological justification and physical prowess in Brown's representations of the black male slave body.

Any research into constructions of Susan Washington in 'Slave Revolt at Sea' not only confirms Brown's reshaping of conventions deployed by Douglass in *The Heroic Slave*, but also Child's and Hopkins's indebtedness to Brown in representations of the black female slave body. A significant innovation upon Douglass's text consists in Brown's decision to place Susan Washington on the *Creole* itself:

Among the slave-women, was one whose beauty at once attracted attention ... she yet had a majestic figure ... well-moulded shoulders, prominent bust, black hair which hung in ringlets, mild blue eyes, finely-chiselled mouth, with a splendid set of teeth, a turned and well-rounded chin, skin marbled with the animation of life, and veined by blood given to her by her master, she stood as the representative of two races.⁴⁸

The statuesque language selected to describe Susan, such as 'majestic figure', 'well-moulded', 'prominent bust' and 'finely-chiselled', underscores an uncritical preoccupation with the visual in 'Slave Revolt at Sea'. Brown conceptualizes the black female body in terms of display and spectacle. By contrast, Hopkins's 'A Dash for Liberty' presents a sophisticated critique as she introduces, to a similarly conventional description of the black female slave, a voyeuristic dimension. She describes the black female's exposure to rape by positioning a white captain as an impudent and illegitimate witness, 'casting bold glances at the reclining figure'.⁴⁹

Brown's use of language introduces gender ambiguity, as he associates Susan with Madison and thereby blurs previously established conventions for representing the black male and female slave figure. His description of Susan's 'majestic figure' recalls Douglass's references to Madison throughout *The Heroic Slave* as 'of manly form' and 'tall, symmetrical, round'.⁵⁰ In emphasizing Susan Washington's as an 'octoroon', Brown introduces the abolitionist literary convention of the 'tragic mulatta'.⁵¹ This convention is expanded upon by Child, in references to 'a beautiful octoroon slave',⁵² and also by Hopkins: both as a means to sentimentalize the vulnerability of the black female body in slavery and to assert the significance of the domestic narrative form in anti-slavery material more generally.⁵³

As a result of their closely paralleled adaptations of this mutiny, Brown's and Child's material can be considered together. Their respective pieces, 'Slave Revolt at Sea' (1867) and 'Madison Washington' (1866), illustrate the didactic potential of black biographical testimony for the inspiration of a black

audience – not only during the Civil War but also in the immediate aftermath of Reconstruction. Child's single biographical piece on this mutiny was published as part of her post-emancipation educational primer, *The Freedmen's Book* (1866), which was both extremely popular yet financially troublesome.⁵⁴ This text included many biographies which eulogized slave heroism while striving to retain their 'romance and truth'.⁵⁵ She was keen to write in 'a very clear and simple form' in order to educate an audience of newly freed and semi-literate slaves. Thus the narrative style of this piece is paternalistic; both Child's use of language and narrative construction are oversimplified, and in its overt moralizing, the tone is noticeably didactic. She adopts an unchallenging prose style: 'This man was a slave, born in Virginia ... from his early youth he always longed to be free';⁵⁶ and a patronizing use of questioning: 'And who do you think was among them?'⁵⁷ Both excerpts provide evidence of Child's problems of narrative production and her difficulties in presenting her material in an accessible but non-patronizing form for her readership.

Child's 'Madison Washington' confirms the increasing significance of the black female slave body in literary and historical narratives of this revolt. Her revision of the male bias embedded in texts by the black male authors Brown and Douglass can be considered in conjunction with Pauline Hopkins's equally gendered remodelling of abolitionist conventions. Thus, Child's opening paragraph introduces the importance of gender in these versions as different authors, according to whether they are male or female, place a greater or lesser emphasis upon competing aspects of black male and female heroism:

She [Susan] was the daughter of her master, and the blood of the white race predominated in several of her ancestors. Her eyes were blue, and her glossy dark hair fell in soft silky ringlets. Her lover was an unmixed black, and he also was handsome. His features were well formed, and his large dark eyes were very bright and expressive. He had a manly air, his motions were easy and dignified, and altogether he looked like a being that would never consent to wear a chain.⁵⁸

The parallel phrasing and content in this description emphasizes Child's direct intertextual borrowings from Brown. For example, 'unmixed black' registers her simplification and abbreviation of Brown's representations of Madison as 'of African parentage, with no mixture in his blood', while his 'bright and expressive eyes' replaces Brown's more ornate consideration of the 'fascination in the gaze of his finely cut eyes'.⁵⁹ This extract demonstrates Child's interest in destabilizing the primacy of black male heroism in accounts of the *Creole* revolt. She restructures Douglass's and Brown's narrative preoccupation with Madison by introducing the black male slave as a secondary character: Susan is the point of reference for Madison as he is described in sentimental terms as her 'lover'. Furthermore, Child renders explicit the limitations of black male heroism by suggesting its inability to ameliorate the particular condition of the

‘octoroon’ female in slavery: ‘a handsome woman, who is a slave, is constantly liable to insult and wrong, from which an enslaved husband has no power to protect her.’⁶⁰ In contrast to *The Heroic Slave* and ‘Slave Revolt at Sea’, which emphasize the invincibility of the black male body, ‘Madison Washington’ exemplifies black male powerlessness. Child’s technique documents the sexual vulnerability of the black female in slavery while also signalling the rejection by slave-owners and slavery’s apologists of the sanctity of black domesticity.

Child’s decision to situate ‘Madison Washington’ within a sentimental tradition confirms her focus upon slavery’s violation of the black family. She follows her description of black insurrection with a pseudo-fairy-tale dramatization of the importance to Madison of having ‘his beloved Susan in his arms.... He felt richer at that moment than any king with a golden crown upon his head.’⁶¹ Finally, she makes a significant connection between the black slave body and performance: They [the slaves] still continued to wear their chains, and no one suspected that they could slip their hands and feet out at their pleasure.’⁶² This excerpt, in particular, disrupts the straightforward relationship between appearance and reality that is presumed to exist by white racist discourse, by instead focusing upon subversion and disguise. As previously documented, such models of racist thought presume that the slave’s body and the significance of the visual are the only accurate guides to interpretation. Overall, Child’s text resists narrative strategies of objectification designed to treat the black male and female slave body as spectacle.

Finally, Pauline E. Hopkins fulfils a significant role by bringing this mutiny into the twentieth century while betraying the influence of Reconstruction in her melodramatic piece, ‘A Dash for Liberty’, published much later in 1901.⁶³ This version appeared in *The Colored American Magazine*, a black periodical circulated in Boston for the edification of an elite black audience, and for which Hopkins wrote prolifically as well as serving as editor. In general terms, Hopkins’s material directly engages with the previous authors of this revolt. She extends and adapts Child’s conventional reproductions of the black female slave as an iconographic image in abolitionist discourse. Indeed, Hopkins’s physical representations of Madison and Susan Washington betray an extensive intertextual debt to Brown’s constructions in ‘Slave Revolt at Sea’. Thus, in a similar manner to his strategies discussed above, Hopkins summarizes Madison Washington as ‘an unmixed African, of grand physique, and one of the handsomest of his race’.⁶⁴ However, while her descriptions of Susan follow closely those given by Brown, she includes a significant revision. Brown’s factual analysis of Susan’s ‘skin marbled with the animation of life, and veined by blood given to her by her master, she stood as the representative of two races’ becomes a critique in ‘A Dash for Liberty’: ‘marbled skin veined by her master’s blood, – representative of two races, to which did she belong?’⁶⁵ Therefore, Hopkins’s introduction of interrogatory material emphasizes the blurring of identity formations in order to critique any rigid attempts at categorization by white racist, or indeed black nationalist,

discourse.

Before concluding, this article closes with a brief discussion of the ways in which these authors introduce the following additional issues, as far as they relate to descriptions of the black male and female slave body: first, the relationship between the black slave body and authorial innovations upon preceding white and black male narrative process of representation; second, the legitimacy of representing black violence: and third, the innovative manipulation of archetypes. In terms of racialized models of heroism, Hopkins presents the black male figure in an adversarial position in relation to traditions of white heroism. Thus, 'A Dash for Liberty' confirms the significance of naming as, in marked contrast to Douglass, Brown and Child, she renames Madison Washington, Madison Monroe. This revision suggests her desire to resist white male and female conventions for black representation which were confirmed by articles in the press and by Child's material. Such a strategy also signals her self-conscious restructuring of the black male record as she interrogates abolitionist conventions maintained by Douglass and Brown. In considerations of black violence, Brown's introduction of material dramatizing white sailors' attempts to retake the *Creole* privileges black heroism above white insurrection.⁶⁶ His text dismisses white racist caricatures by establishing a separatist framework within which to consider black male heroism: The efforts of Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner and Madison Washington to strike the chains of slavery from the limbs of their enslaved race will live in history.'⁶⁷ Equally, Hopkins's text endorses, without equivocation, black male physical resistance as the most effective means to secure 'individual rights': 'Must I be denied the right of aggressive defense against those who would overpower and crush me by superior force?'⁶⁸ Finally, in continuation of research which addresses the black female as 'octoroon' in these texts, Hopkins's presentation of Susan Washington innovates upon the 'tragic mulatta' template. Thus, while possessing the 'evident intention of going overboard' following the attempted rape by the white slave captain, Susan instead secures her own survival by physical resistance in a comparable 'dash for liberty'.⁶⁹ In such non-specific references to Susan as the 'woman' and 'the startled sleeper' during her moment of rebellion, Hopkins echoes earlier representations of Madison as the 'intrepid leader' and complicates representations of archetypal black male and female slave figures for her black audience.

This research which investigates representations of the black slave body in material by Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Lydia Maria Child and Pauline E. Hopkins demonstrates the interdependence between the black male figure, domesticity and abolitionism in interpretations of the black female slave body. In sum, descriptions of Madison Washington variously as an African 'prince' and a George Washington type were heavily influenced by authorial bias, publication forum and desired readership. The conventions adopted and adapted by these writers to portray the black male and female slave body

depended not only upon political context and affiliation, but also gender construction, polemical intent, historical background and intended audience.

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NOTES

1. See F. Douglass, 'Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano: An Address Delivered in New York, on April 23, 1849', in J.W. Blassingame (ed.), *The Frederick Douglass Papers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979–92), Vol.2, p. 155.
2. F. Douglass, *The Heroic Slave*, in J. Griffiths (ed.), *Autographs for Freedom* (Boston, MA: John P. Jewett, 1853), p. 179. All subsequent quotations from this publication are referenced by the abbreviation *HS*.
3. W.W. Brown, 'Slave Revolt at Sea', in *The Negro in the American Rebellion: His Heroism and His Fidelity* (1867; New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1968), p.75. All subsequent quotations from this publication are referenced by the abbreviation *SRS*.
4. L.M. Child, 'Madison Washington', in *The Freedmen's Book* (Boston, MA: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), p. 147. All subsequent quotations from this publication are referenced by the abbreviation *MWFB*.
5. P.E. Hopkins, 'A Dash for Liberty', *Colored American Magazine*, Aug. 1901, p.243. All subsequent quotations are to this publication and referenced by the abbreviation *DL*.
6. *Senate Documents*, 27th Cong., 2nd sess., II. 21 Jan. 1841–2, No.51:1, 24. This government record provides the main source of information and includes testimony solely by white witnesses. Another lengthy article investigates insurance claims, see 'Thomas McCargo v The New Orleans Insurance Company', *Robinson's Reports* 10 (March 1845), pp. 201–354.
7. Both phrases, the 'mutineers and murderers' and 'immortal nineteen', were popularized by the pro- and anti-slavery press and encapsulated the ways in which, on the one hand, antiabolitionist material castigated black barbarity and, on the other, anti-slavery supporters used revolutionary rhetoric to legitimate black rebellion.
8. *Senate Documents*, 27th Cong., 2nd sess., II. 21 Jan. 1841–2, No.51: 36–7.
9. *Ibid*.
10. *Ibid.*, 38, 37.
11. *Ibid.*, 37.
12. *Ibid*.
13. *Ibid*.
14. For a study of the diplomatic negotiations and a reconstruction of events, see H. Jones, 'The Peculiar Institution and National Honor: The Case of the *Creole* Slave Revolt', *Civil War History*, 21(March 1975), pp. 28–50.
15. *Ibid.*, p.47.
16. For example, Lydia Maria Child argues that 'the Amistad case ... prepared the way for the Creole. A few years ago Madison Washington would have been dismissed by the American press as a "base wretch", "a cut-throat", &c ... The spontaneous gushings of the popular heart in favor of the Amistad captives doubtless performed a large share of this work.' See L. M. Child, 'The Iron Shroud' (1842), reprinted in C.K. Karcher (ed.), *A Lydia Maria Child Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), p.219.
17. 'Madison Washington', *The Liberator*, 10 June 1842 (reprinted from the *Friend of Man*); The Creoles – Strike for Liberty! – The Hero Mutineers', *The Liberator*, 7 Jan. 1842.
18. For example, William Wells Brown's description of Madison Washington in 'Slave Revolt at Sea' reproduced material from this piece. The Creoles – Strike for Liberty' declares: 'His [Madison's] commanding attitude and daring orders, when he stood a freeman on the slaver's deck, and his perfect preparation for the grand alternative of liberty or death, which stood before him, are splendid exemplifications of the true heroic'. In contrast, Brown's text adds to an identical inclusion of this material the following important change: he replaces 'when he stood a freeman' with the phrase

- 'now that he was free' (SRS, p.34). In its focus upon immediacy, Brown's revision provides a heightened sense of urgency in the pressing need to secure emancipation for his black audience. Equally, The Creoles – Strike for Liberty' presentation of Washington's 'generous leniency' as 'he dressed the wounds of the poor sailors who had fought against him' is adopted by Brown, Child and Hopkins in their texts. Brown and Child emphasize that Washington 'with his own hands dressed their wounds' (SRS, p.35, MWFB, p. 152) while Hopkins summarizes simply 'their wounds were dressed' (DL, p.247).
19. See 'Mutiny and Murder', *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 3 Dec. 1841. This article condemns the *Creole* revolt as an 'outrage' and excludes specific references to Madison Washington in an attempt to deny individual black heroism.
 20. These research findings have led to the discovery that Frederick Douglass published another version of this work, possibly later during the Civil War, with the extended and melodramatic title *The Heroic Slave, a Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, in pursuit of Liberty* (N.p.: n.p., 1853/63?). For a comparison of these two versions see C.M. Bernier, 'A Comparative Exploration of Narrative Ambiguities in Frederick Douglass's Two Versions of *The Heroic Slave* (1853, 1863?)', *Slavery and Abolition*, 22, 2 (August 2001), pp.69–86.
 21. See Griffiths, *Autographs for Freedom*, pp. 174–239. This work was published alongside another by the white abolitionist Samuel May, entitled 'The Heroic Slave-Woman', which in terms of gender issues can be effectively read as a companion piece.
 22. HS, p. 177.
 23. Ibid., p. 178.
 24. Ibid., pp. 178, 180 and 217 respectively.
 25. Ibid., p. 179.
 26. Ibid., p. 179.
 27. See Douglass, 'Slavery the Slumbering Volcano', p. 155.
 28. For an analysis of representations of Susan Washington in this text see, for example, the following essays: R. Yarborough, 'Race, Violence, and Manhood: The Masculine Ideal in Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave"' in E.J. Sundquist (ed.), *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); M.M. Sale, 'Critiques from Within: Antebellum Projects of Resistance', *American Literature*, 64, 4 (December 1992), pp. 695–719; R. Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); P.G. Foreman, 'Sentimental Abolition in Douglass's Decade: Revision, Erotic Conversion, and the Politics of Witnessing in "The Heroic Slave" and *My Bondage and My Freedom*', in H.B. Wanhams (ed.), *Criticism and the Color Line: Desegregating American Literary Studies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996).
 29. 'Madison Washington', *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 28 April 1842.
 30. HS, pp. 180, 192 and 190 respectively.
 31. Ibid., pp. 219–20.
 32. For example, see R. Yarborough, 'Race, Violence, and Manhood', p. 176, and R. Wiegman, *American Anatomies*, p. 76.
 33. See *Pine and Palm*, 17 Aug. 1861. The only reference to this text which I have been able to trace is made by William Farrison in his biography of William Wells Brown, *William Wells Brown: Author and Reformer* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969). As part of this 'Celebrated Colored Americans' series, Brown also published a biography of Nat Turner.
 34. W.W. Brown, *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius and His Achievements* (1863; New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 3. Other early black historians include W.C. Nell, *Colored Americans in the Wars of 1776 and 1812* (1852; Philadelphia, PA: H.T. Kealing, 1902) and J.W.C. Pennington, *A Textbook of the Origins and History of the Colored People* (Hartford, CT: C. Skinner, 1841).
 35. I am indebted to John Cullen Greusser for his reference to this text in his accomplished piece on Pauline Hopkins's version of this mutiny, 'Taking Liberties: Pauline Hopkins's Recasting of the *Creole* Rebellion', in J.C. Greusser and N.Y. McKay (eds), *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996), p. 102.
 36. See W.W. Brown, *The Negro in the American Rebellion*, pp. 26–36.
 37. SRS, p. 26.
 38. HS, p. 178.
 39. Ibid., p. 179.
 40. Ibid., p. 175.

41. *SRS*, p. 36.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–8.
43. *HS*, pp. 176–7.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 233–4.
45. *Ibid.*, p.225.
46. *SRS*, p. 31.
47. *DL*, pp. 247 and 244 respectively.
48. *SRS*, p. 33.
49. *DL*, p. 246.
50. *HS*, p. 179. In ‘Slave Revolt at Sea’ Brown conflates black male and female difference by situating the black female within a white revolutionary tradition (*SRS*, p. 32). Furthermore, both Brown and Hopkins (*DL*, p. 245) attribute to Susan the white Virginian heritage previously reclaimed by Douglass for Madison Washington (*HS*, pp. 174–5).
51. *SRS*, p. 32.
52. *MWFB*, p. 147.
53. *DL*, p. 245.
54. L.M. Child, *The Freedmen’s Book*.
55. While discussing William and Ellen Crafts, as well as Madison Washington’s narrative, in a letter to her publisher James T. Fields, Child confided that ‘You will find William and Ellen Crafts the most interesting ... James Madison Washington is also very romantic, and every word of it true.’ See M. Meltzer and P.G. Holland (eds), *Lydia Maria Child: Selected Letters, 1817–1880* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), p.459.
56. *MWFB*, p. 147.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
59. *SRS*, p. 26.
60. *MWFB*, p. 147.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
63. See note 5 above.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
65. *SRS*, p. 32; *DL*, p. 246.
66. *SRS*, p. 35.
67. *Ibid.*, p.36.
68. *DL*, p. 243–4.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

‘An Outrage on all Decency’: Abolitionist Reactions to Flogging Jamaican Slave Women, 1780–1834

HENRICE ALTINK

The system of production in Jamaican slave society depended upon the successful subjugation of the slave body. This was largely achieved through the use or threat of violent punishment, especially flogging. Of all the indecencies linked with slavery, abolitionists were most enraged about the violence done to the slave's body. The lacerated slave body in abolitionist discourse was first and foremost a female body since they regarded physical violence against women as a particularly insidious crime against humanity.¹ Under the Jamaican Act of 1826, a slave woman could not be given more than ten lashes if an owner or overseer was not present; but if an owner or overseer was present, then the woman could get 39 lashes maximum.² The usual mode of flogging was to have a woman held down by several fellow slaves, while flogging bare parts of her body with a cart whip, ebony brushes or another instrument of torture.³ On most estates, flogging was a public event that took place in front of a large gathering of slaves and estate officers.⁴

Abolitionists argued that female flogging should not only be a matter of concern for the flogged women themselves but for all members of Jamaican society, both black and white. The Methodist Revd Robert Young, who worked in Jamaica in the early 1820s, expressed this argument most clearly in his statement before the 1832 Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions. He told the committee members that female flogging was ‘much calculated to sour and brutalize the minds of all concerned’.⁵ As Diana Paton has shown in her article ‘Decency, Dependence and the Lash’, abolitionists were especially concerned about the effects of flogging on the gender roles of the slaves.⁶ The abolitionist reactions to the flogging of Jamaican slave women also betray an anxiety about the gender roles in white Jamaican society. The discussion was more than a means to convey a sense of the horrors of slavery. It was also a way through which abolitionists articulated their conception of a future free Jamaica. They argued that to achieve such a society, both slaves and whites had to conform their gender roles more closely to those of the middle class in the metropolitan society.⁷ It was a middle-class man's duty to protect the home, exercise authority over his dependants and provide for his family, while his wife had to

obey him, give him loving support and raise his children.⁸

This study is divided into four parts. The first provides a brief overview of the abolitionist discussion on the flogging of Jamaican slave women. The second outlines what abolitionists believed to be the moral effects of the flogging on the slave community. They argued that flogging not only had a detrimental effect on the moral behaviour of the victim but also on her partner, children and the slave drivers who applied the whip. The third part examines their remarks about the effects of the practice on the moral conduct of white Jamaicans, in particular the master and his wife. The final part concludes that abolitionists used a set of gender norms and a notion of freedom to interpret the wounding of the slave woman's body.

Narratives of Female Suffering

The flogging of Jamaican slave women played a marginal role in abolitionist discourse during the campaign to abolish the slave trade.⁹ A few (former) residents addressed it in verse and mentioned it in their testimonies before a committee of the Privy Council on the Slave Trade.¹⁰ However, it featured more prominently during the 1820s and 1830s campaign for emancipation. In 1824 the British government took up the abolitionists' demands for ameliorative legislation when it introduced an Order in Council for the Crown Colonies which embodied among others a ban on female flogging. Colonies with their own legislatures, such as Jamaica and Barbados, were requested to enact a similar scheme for improving conditions of the slaves.¹¹ The Jamaican House of Assembly never considered the banning of female flogging. It did, however, debate for four hours whether to agree to a ban on the flogging of women in a state of undress before finally deciding that such flogging should be allowed.¹² In the end, the House declined to pass any of the suggested ameliorative measures except one that protected slave women against rape.¹³ As a result, Jamaican slave women continued to be subjected to the lash until the Abolition Act took effect in August 1834.¹⁴ It was especially the attitude of the Jamaican House of Assembly that made many abolitionists realize that the timid proposals for gradual emancipation led nowhere and that only immediate emancipation was sufficient.¹⁵ The flogging of Jamaican slave women featured heavily in the writings of these 'immediatists' and was one of their main tools for exposing the nature of the slave system. Their narratives of female suffering were largely based on missionary accounts, official documents and local newspapers and found their way into a variety of genres, ranging from pamphlets and parliamentary reports to novels.

An important voice on the issue during the campaign for emancipation was that of Viscount Goderich, the Colonial Secretary. Although he was not a pronounced abolitionist, his views will be examined in this study as he had links with the abolitionist movement and played an educational and propagandist role in the emancipation of the slaves by exposing abuses by planters and exerting pressure on the latter.¹⁶

The accounts of lacerated female bodies served primarily as a means of arousing compassion and encouraging action on behalf of the sufferer.¹⁷ This was first done by asking the readers to identify themselves with the suffering woman or, as was more often the case, with her partner who could not prevent her punishment. One pamphlet asked its female readers to ‘help the poor slave women’ because they were flogged when they carried out ‘the most important of all maternal duties at any other time than the prescribed hours of the overseer’.¹⁸

A second strategy was the use of rich layers of detail that aimed to make the pain of the women seem real. Captain Studholme Hodgson, who was stationed in the island between 1833 and 1836, described the following scene in his *Truths from the West Indies* (1838):

Imagine a woman brought out before the whole assembled gang, then stripped of her covering, and thrown upon the earth, her legs and arms tightly held by four men. These appalling preparations concluded, executioners, armed with knotted cords, proceed to inflict stripe after stripe until nature almost sinks under the murderous punishment.¹⁹

The pain was also made more real by denying the victim a voice. Former resident Benjamin McMahon concentrated in his account of the flogging of a young girl on what her body felt, rather than what she said:

The girl gave the most piercing shrieks I ever heard from a human being, and continued shrieking until entirely exhausted, she then lay writhing and shuddering, giving a dreadful groan at each lash.... [S]he was panting, or grasping for breath – and in a broken voice scarcely audible, she cried ‘water!, water!, water!’²⁰

Abolitionists presented themselves as the sole interpreters of the slave woman’s suffering body. This body, they argued, demonstrated that slavery reduced the slaves to a less than fully human condition.²¹ Or in the words of the Anglican Revd Trew, ‘every stroke inflicted upon her sinks her lower in the scale of being’.²²

The following sections will demonstrate that the abolitionist reactions to female flogging were influenced by and contributed to the metropolitan discussion on gender norms. It was also influenced by the wider contemporary discourse about the form and purpose of punishment. Humanitarian reformers rejected the public character of punishment that they perceived to be working against the civilizing process. They favoured imprisonment as it did not inflict needless and excessive pain but merely employed a minimal level of severity in order to secure their proclaimed goal of reforming the individual.²³

Female Flogging and its Effects on the Slave Community

Abolitionists used the treatment of slave women as a yardstick to measure how far slave societies were removed from their idea of a proper civilized and moral society.²⁴ In such a society women were held in high esteem because they carried out, as wives and mothers, important duties in the home. One of these was to improve the moral behaviour of the husband and children.²⁵ Abolitionists argued that during the flogging, parts of the slave woman's body were exposed – because she was forced to bare her back or because the lash tore her clothes from her back – which prevented her from attaining the level of 'purity' needed to exercise the role of 'guardian of morality'. Viscount Goderich, for instance, remarked that the practice repressed the 'growth of the appropriate virtues of the female character'.²⁶ It is not surprising then that abolitionists rejected the flogging of Jamaican slave women far more on the grounds of the exposure of their bodies than on the basis of the severity of the lash. For example, a newspaper article that examined the Council of Protection's proceedings in the case of Kitty Hylton, – a domestic slave who was brutally punished in April 1829 by her owner the Anglican Revd Bridges – concentrated far more upon her nakedness than the severity of the flogging and kicking. It mentioned that Kitty had been 'stripped of every article of dress' before she was flogged, that she had fled 'in a state of nudity' to magistrate Raffington, and that she had launched a complaint with magistrate Henry Cox in 'an almost naked state'.²⁷

Abolitionists used various rhetorical strategies to convey the immorality involved in female flogging. Some gave very vivid descriptions, almost in a voyeuristic way, of the exposed body parts. Benjamin McMahon mentioned that the 'velvet skin' of the young girl was 'covered with blood – her body from the shoulder to the thighs, was one frightful mass of mangled flesh'.²⁸ Others, however, avoided any direct references to the exposed body parts. The Methodist Revd Richard Bickell wrote, for example, that slave women were flogged 'on those parts which shall be nameless for me, but which in women, for decency's sake, ought never to be exposed'.²⁹ Another strategy abolitionists used to express the immorality of the practice was to compare slave women to women in their own society. *The Negro's Memorial* (1825) declared that 'the females accustomed to the exposure of their persons, can have none of that attractive modesty which forms a part of their character in Europe'.³⁰ Through the use of such rhetorical strategies, then, abolitionists articulated an important attribute of white middle-class womanhood – purity – which they offered to slave women on the assumption that they were full and equal human beings.³¹ Many abolitionists tried to convince their audience that slave women had the ability to be pure and hence that they would ensure the moral standards of the future free society. They did this primarily by giving examples of women who resisted the exposure of their bodies. Former resident Henry Bleby, for example, mentioned in his *Death Struggles of Slavery* (1853) that a married woman and mother of several children had asked the overseer who flogged her that 'her nakedness might not be indecently

exposed'.³² Considering the abolitionists' aim to encourage their readers to undertake action, it is not surprising that all the examples of resistance ended in failure. The saddest tale of resistance is without doubt that of Cato, a slave woman who felt so 'indignant at being thus degraded' that she 'tore her dress, and hung herself with it'.³³

Abolitionists posed female flogging more as a problem for the partners and the children of the flogged women than for the women themselves. They often described scenes where a slave woman was either held down by one of her own children or where her children were among the spectators of the event.³⁴ They argued that the flogging had a detrimental impact on the children. First, it gave them an incorrect understanding of right and wrong in society. 'A wish to desecrate the wretch that made their mother weep' was, in Revd Trew's opinion, the only lesson that children learned from watching their mother being flogged.³⁵ Second, it 'weakened' if not completely 'destroyed' their feelings for their mother.³⁶

As to the partners, flogging also blunted their feelings and instilled in them a wish for revenge.³⁷ It addition, it was suggested that it deterred them from marrying their partner as they did not want to commit themselves to a woman whose body could at any time be exposed to the public gaze. Former resident William Taylor expressed this most clearly in his statement before the 1832 select committee: 'A negro would not marry because he could not endure that his wedded wife should be flogged. His occasional mistress being flogged was not so offensive to him, but in the event of marriage it is more offensive.'³⁸ The author of *The Negro's Memorial* went even further when he argued that female flogging gave slave men an excuse for 'licentiousness'.³⁹ Finally, female flogging was seen as an obstacle for slave men to exercise their role as protector of their dependants. Various abolitionist tracts invited their readers to sympathize with the male slave who could not prevent his wife's or daughter's punishment. *A Letter to John Bull* (1823), for instance, asked: 'What would thou have said John, if ... thy wife, or perhaps thy grown-up daughter were stretched naked, with face downwards on the floor ... and lacerated with a whip.'⁴⁰ Former resident Captain Marjoribanks conveyed slave men's impotence in verse:

No, sex, no age, you ever learn'd to spare,
but female limbs indecently lay bare;
see the poor mother lay her babe aside!
nor midst her pangs, her tears, her horrid cries,
dare the sad husband turn his pitying eyes.⁴¹

It is only in early abolitionist writings that one can find examples of slave men trying to protect their wives against a driver or overseer.⁴² Edward Rushton's *West Indian Eclogues* (1787) contains a poem in which a slave man narrates his response to his wife's flogging:

Jumba, I saw the deed, – I heard her grief!
Could I do less? – I flew to her relief!
I fell before him – sued, embrac'd his knee
and bade his anger vent itself on me.⁴³

Abolitionists, then, assumed that a ban on female flogging would turn a slave man into a 'domesticated' man, that is a married man who carried out his 'natural' role as protector of the home. This 'domesticated' man was encouraged to lead a virtuous and civilized life by exerting selfcontrol and caring about others.⁴⁴ The latter attribute of this ideal of manhood was even more clearly expressed in their remarks about the drivers that applied the whip. These slave men were generally described as willing to inflict needless pain. Captain Studholme Hodgson mentioned a driver who 'directed the lash, with unerring aim, at the same precise spot, until he has worked deep into the flesh, and well established what he facetiously called a raw'.⁴⁵ The drivers were also accused of lacking compassion for their victims. Henry Whiteley, who visited the island in 1832, wrote about a driver who had flogged a woman so severely that she had 'screamed out violently' for having left work early in order to visit her sick child in the estate hospital.⁴⁶ A less common image of a driver can be found in *Death Struggles of Slavery*. It mentions a driver who refused to follow an order to flog his own wife for having stolen a piece of sugar cane.⁴⁷ Like the slave man in Rushton's poem, this account served to show that slave men had the ability to exercise their 'normal' gender roles.

Thus in their reactions to female flogging, abolitionists defined slave women and men primarily on the basis of what they lacked. Slave women were seen to lack the feminine virtue of purity, while slave men did not possess the virtues of compassion, courage and determination. As the accounts of resistance to female flogging show, abolitionists did not attribute the slaves' lack of virtues to 'nature' but to slavery. They assumed that freedom would enable them to exercise their proper gender roles and that as a result a more civilized and moral society would develop.

Female Flogging and its Effects on White Jamaican Society

The slave women's white tormentors, both male and female, were also defined on the basis of the virtues that they lacked. The male tormentor was above all accused of not leading a civilized life. Abolitionists tried in various ways to make their readers question the supposed civilization of the planters and their white employees. First, they provided them with accounts of the flogging of the most 'helpless' slave women, that is pregnant and nursing women, to show that white men in the island did little to elevate women. Various examples were given of slave mothers who were flogged for carrying out their maternal duties, such as nursing and looking after sick children.⁴⁸ Abolitionists were even more enraged about the 'barbarous' and 'revolting' practice of flogging

pregnant women. They argued that measures adopted by some planters to modify the flogging of pregnant women, such as allowing them to lie on the ground with their belly in a specially dug hole, was not enough to provide them with the care they deserved. Only a complete exemption from the lash was seen as sufficient.⁴⁹

Second, abolitionists gave numerous examples of excessive cruelty – instances of flogging that exceeded the legally allowed 39 lashes – that were referred to as ‘savage’, ‘barbarous’ and ‘inhuman’.⁵⁰ Most abolitionists addressed the conduct of white overseers as they, more often than the planters, ordered such punishments or inflicted it themselves. Captain Studholme Hodgson wrote, for example, that ‘it often occurs that the overseer cannot curb his fury sufficiently long to admit of the requisite preparations’.⁵¹ Henry Whiteley agreed with Hodgson that Jamaican overseers were nothing but sadists. He mentioned in his travel account that an overseer had told him, after excessively flogging two young girls for not having done their work sufficiently, that it was ‘the best cracking, by G-!’⁵² Far more condemning language was used for planters who went beyond the slave law. Revd Benjamin Godwin, for example, referred to one of them as a ‘monster of cruelty’.⁵³ In his discussion of the Kitty Hylton case, Viscount Goderich pointed out first of all that the punishment had been out of all proportion:

For a trifling mistake in the execution of her master’s orders, this female slave appears to have been first violently struck and kicked by her master, and then, by his directions, flogged with such severity as to have excited the commiseration of every person who bore witness to the her appearance after the punishment.⁵⁴

Second, he concluded that Revd Bridges’s conduct had been ‘unmanly and disgraceful’ and could not be excused as ‘a momentary ebullition of anger’ because the cruelty had been ‘repeated and persevering’.⁵⁵ Goderich also referred to the conduct of Mr Jackson, a planter who had inflicted various forms of physical abuse on his domestics, the mother and daughter Kate and Ann Whitfield, as ‘unmanly’.⁵⁶ He clearly based his opinion about these masters on a norm of manhood which accepted that men possessed an innate propensity to aggression and for this reason urged them to control their aggression.⁵⁷

The accounts by several pronounced abolitionists of the Kitty Hylton case also emphasized Revd Bridges’s lack of self-control.⁵⁸ Because the tormentor was a clergyman of ‘talent and respectability’ – he had written a history of Jamaica as well as several pamphlets in defence of slaver – the Kitty Hylton case provided abolitionists with an excellent means to demonstrate that slavery corrupted whites as much slaves.⁵⁹ Henry Bleby, for instance, regarded Revd Bridges even as an incarnation of ‘the evils inherent in human slavery’.⁶⁰

Third, abolitionists gave accounts of white male tormentors whose feelings were so blunted by the regular infliction of pain that they were unable to

express sympathy for the flogged woman. Henry Bleby mentioned that the overseer denied the woman's request not to be indecently exposed with 'a brutal reply, too gross to be repeated'.⁶¹

Abolitionists thus suggested that white men in the island deviated as much as slave men from the middle-class norm of manhood. They were clearly not 'men of feeling'. This idea was not only conveyed through images of brutal men who willingly inflicted pain and felt no sympathy for their victims but also through comparisons of white men in the island with white men in the metropolitan society, presenting the former as inferior. The Baptist missionary William Knibb, for instance, asked his readers 'what Englishman could stand by, what Englishman could even contemplate the flogging of a female without a flush of indignation?'⁶²

Abolitionists were far more concerned about the lack of virtues of white women who applied the whip or who ordered the flogging of slave women.⁶³ Dr Jackson, who worked in the island from 1774 until 1778, told the Privy Council committee on the slave trade that he had been shocked to find 'a lady of some consequence in the island, superintending the punishment of her slaves, male and female, ordering the number of lashes, and with her own hands flogging the negro driver, if he did not punish the slaves properly'.⁶⁴ The shock of Jackson and that of many other abolitionists stemmed from the fact that this white female tormentor violated far more the metropolitan norms of gender than her male counterpart. First, she was not confined to her 'proper sphere', that is the house. It was permissible for middle-class women at the time to show a restraining hand in the house towards the children and the servants but not in public.⁶⁵ Second, she did not exercise her proper role as homemaker, wife and mother. Third, she undermined the assumption that women were potentially more virtuous than men, that is, that they were more chaste and softer. As to the latter, women were seen as more open to emotional life around them and quicker in reading the feelings of others than men and were therefore allocated the task of sustaining and even improving the moral qualities of their husband and children.⁶⁶

Abolitionists concentrated upon the white female tormentor's lack of the 'finer sensibilities' as this prevented her from improving the moral standards in white Jamaican society. Like her male counterpart, she inflicted excessive pain for trivial offences. Viscount Goderich emphasized this trait in his account of the physical abuse of Kate and Ann Whitfield, who had suffered far more at the hands of their mistress than their master.⁶⁷ He mentioned, for instance, that Mrs Jackson had flogged Ann for 'some violence of demeanour' and 'insolent language' with a 'supplejack' until it broke.⁶⁸

The female tormentor also failed to display compassion for her victims by ignoring their calls for mercy as well as the requests of white bystanders to stop this 'degrading practice'. Lieutenant Baker-Davison mentioned in 1789 that all his attempts to stop a neighbouring mistress from 'flogging her slaves too cruelly' had been in vain.⁶⁹ She also resembled her male counterparts in

that she enjoyed the infliction of pain and the humiliation of slave women. The main character in the antislavery novel *The Wanderings of Warwick* (1794) mentioned that a mistress who had supervised the flogging of a young slave girl 'seemed to me to enjoy the spectacle – a spectacle which I was so little able to bear'.⁷⁰

While abolitionists writing in the 1780s and 1790s concentrated upon the willingness of the female tormentor to inflict excessive cruelty, those in the 1820s and 1830s stressed the fact that she did nothing to prevent the indecent exposure of her female victims. J. Campbell, for example, emphasized that Eleanor Mead's mistress had 'ordered her to be conveyed in her naked and exposed state to the bilboes, by two men, she herself walking behind'.⁷¹ Some abolitionists went even further by suggesting that the female tormentor gained pleasure from watching her female victims in a state of nudity. The Revd Bickell, for instance, mentioned a mistress who preferred to flog her slave women when they were washing themselves in a pond.⁷²

Thus by denying her female victims a sense of decency the female tormentor, just as much as her male counterpart, prevented slave women from adhering to their proper and natural gender roles. Another way in which she did this was by giving them an incorrect example of proper female behaviour. Viscount Goderich expressed this most clearly in his discussion of the Kate and Ann Whitfield case: 'With such a domestic example, what decorum could be expected from an ignorant negress?',⁷³

Abolitionists, then, expressed in their discussion of the slave woman's white tormentors the idea that white men and women in the island did not adhere to the white norms of masculinity and femininity. As in the case of slave men and women, this deviation from the norm was presented as a result of slavery. The women's deviation was seen as more problematic than men's. A white man who flogged a slave woman did not violate the key attributes of the white middle-class norm of manhood. He was in his proper sphere and exerted, as the norm expected, control over his dependants. In other words, he was a 'domesticated man' though not a 'man of feeling'.⁷⁴ The white woman, on the other hand, was neither domesticated nor sensitive. As such, she not only prevented a change in the moral standards of white society but also hindered a reform of the slaves' moral qualities.

Conclusion

The foregoing has shown that the abolitionists' attempts to free the slaves were part of a wider project, whose aim was a profound transformation of the British slave colonies. Abolitionists aimed to change Jamaica and other colonies into Christian, civilized, capitalist, free-labour economies with democratic institutions. It was especially in their reactions to female flogging that abolitionists specified how the slave colony could become a country as civilized as their own. They used middle-class norms of gender to interpret the lacerated body and argued that both black and white Jamaicans had to adhere

to these in order to bring Jamaican society closer to their idea of a civilized and moral society. Women, it was argued, could only guide their husband's and children's moral behaviour if they were confined to the house where they would develop the 'finer sensibility' of compassion for the suffering of others. Men could make Jamaica more moral if they protected the purity of women, kept their emotions under control, and were sensitive to the suffering of others.

Thus abolitionists argued that slaves would only be free after being resocialized to accept a set of gender roles that ensured the survival of the new society. Indirectly, they also expressed the idea that freedom required the adoption of self-discipline.⁷⁵ Abolitionists based this idea of freedom on an inclusive notion of human nature. They were of the opinion that, like all human beings, slave men and women had the potential to carry out their gender roles and to work without the use or threat of physical punishment. One could argue that by using gender norms and ideas about discipline to interpret the slave woman's lacerated body, abolitionists attributed slaves with humanity. However, as they described the slave woman's degrading and dehumanizing condition in terms of what her body felt rather than what she thought or said about it, this humanity was at best potential.

Furthermore, this in-depth study has given an insight into the rhetorical strategies adopted by abolitionists. In order to legitimize their project and engender action, they depicted lacerated slave women, their partners and children as well as the white Jamaicans in the most miserable terms. Another rhetorical strategy adopted was to compare the lot of the slaves and the white Jamaicans with that of the middle class in the metropolitan society. It is especially this strategy which shows us that abolitionists were as much concerned with constructing their own identity as with defining those of others.⁷⁶ All the virtues that they mentioned the two groups in Jamaican society lacked were a version of those which they sought for themselves. Images of slaves who exercised a certain degree of agency had to convince the audience that these were 'natural' virtues, that is that every human being was born with them but was able to exercise them only within a conducive context.

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NOTES

1. Male slaves were subjected to similar forms of physical violence. Their abuse caused less outrage because it was not seen as an obstacle to their moral improvement. As section two will show, this was because male bodies were not regarded as shameful.
2. If this was not observed, the planter had to pay a fine of ten pounds. *The Consolidated Slave Law passed the 22d December, 1826, commencing on the 1st May, 1827* (n.p.: Courant Office, 1827), clause 36, p.12. This was the same as clause 27 of the 1816 slave law.
3. Another common form of flogging, especially in the late eighteenth century, was to tie women to a tree or a pole. Detailed descriptions of this manner of flogging can be found in part III of the report of the committee of the Privy Council on the slave trade. S. Lambert (ed.), *House of Commons*

4. Thus far no study has examined in detail the punishment regime on Jamaican plantations during the period of slavery. Detailed studies have been carried out on physical punishment in the new sugar colonies, such as Grenada, Demerara-Essequibo and Berbice. See for instance B. Bush, 'Defiance or Submission? The Role of the Slave Woman in Slave Resistance in the British Caribbean', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 1 (1982), pp. 16–38 and M. Turner, 'The 11 O'clock Flog: Women, Work and labour Law in the British Caribbean', *Slavery and Abolition*, 20, 1 (1999), pp.38–58.
5. 'Report from the Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions', *Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter P.P.), 1831–32, xx, p.428.
6. D. Paton, 'Decency, Dependence and the Lash: Gender and the British Debate over Slave Emancipation, 1830–34', *Slavery and Abolition*, 17, 3 (1996), pp. 163–84.
7. On the middle-class formation of the abolitionist movement see D. B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975) and R. Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery 1776–1848* (London: Verso, 1988).
8. For the latest contributions on the middle-class ideal of manhood and womanhood see J. Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1999) and R.B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650–1850: the Emergence of separate Spheres* (London: Longman, 1998).
9. The majority of the abolitionists in this period attacked the slave trade by demonstrating its barbarity and cruelty. A few, however, also tried to attack the system of slavery. They questioned the civilization of the planters in particular by addressing the treatment of slave women. See for instance James Ramsay, *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (Dublin: T. Walker and C. Jenking, 1784).
10. These testimonies can be found in the *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the 18th Century vol.82 'Minutes of Evidence on the Slave Trade', 1791–92*. (Hereafter Slave Trade Committee Report). For more information on this committee see J. Gratus, *The Great White Lie: Slavery, Emancipation, and Changing Radical Attitudes* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1973), pp.49–55.
11. S.J. Hurwitz and E.F. Hurwitz, *Jamaica: A Historical Portrait* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1971), pp. 104–5, The Order in Council applied to Trinidad, Demerara, Essequibo, Berbice and St Lucia.
12. Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p.433.
13. Hurwitz and Hurwitz, *Jamaica*, p. 106.
14. Clause 17 of the Jamaica Act, December 1833, stated that it was illegal to 'punish any female apprentice by whipping or beating her person'. 'Report from the Select Committee on Negro Apprenticeship in the Colonies', P.P. 1836, xv, p.409.
15. The response of the House of Assembly to the slave insurrection in 1831 convinced even more abolitionists that immediate emancipation was the only solution. Although a large section within the respectable ranks of organized abolitionism became 'immediatists', a substantial number remained in favour of gradual emancipation, such as the veteran abolitionist leaders Thomas Clarkson and James Stephen. For more on the abolitionist campaign for emancipation see Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*.
16. Goderich was Colonial Secretary from December 1830 until March 1833. During his time in office, he dealt with three investigations into female physical abuse: Kitty Hylton, Kate and Ann Whitfield and Eleanor James. All three cases were dismissed by the Council of Protection, i.e. a group of local magistrates who had to investigate a slave's complaint and could, on the basis of the information collected, file a suit against the offender. As section 3 will show, his correspondence relating to these cases contains very strong denunciations of the Jamaican planting class.
17. As Thomas Laqueur has demonstrated, these accounts were part of a cluster of humanitarian narratives that detailed the suffering bodies of others and offered a model for social action: 'Bodies, Details and the Humanitarian Narrative', in L. Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, CA, and London: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 176–204.
18. *Dialogue between a Well-Wisher and a Friend to the Slaves in the British Colonies by a Lady* (n.p./n.y.), pp.3–4. Abolitionists presented the flogging as either undeserved or as the result of carrying out maternal duties against the wishes of the estate officers.
19. Captain S. Hodgson, *Truths from the West Indies: Including a Sketch of Madeira in 1833* (London: William Ball, 1838), p. 144. Descriptions such as these not only served to encourage action but also tried to enhance the virtue of the readers by allowing them to feel compassion for the suffering of others. Karen Halttunen has explained this process of 'spectatorial sympathy' in detail in her article 'Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture', *American Historical*

20. B. McMahon, *Jamaica Plantership* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1839), p.53. McMahon's experience of having worked on 24 Jamaican plantations made him write this tract against the apprenticeship system which he regarded as slavery by another name.
21. Randall McGowen provides a detailed analysis of the rhetorical strategies adopted by the abolitionists to arouse action. 'Power and Humanity, or Foucault among the Historians', in C. Jones and R. Porter (ed.), *Reassessing Foucault: Power, Medicine and the Body* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.91–112.
22. Revd Trew as cited in G. Jackson, *A Memoir of the Rev. John Jenkins Late a Wesleyan Missionary in the Island of Jamaica Including Characteristic Notices of West Indian Slavery* (London: Rev. J. Mason, n.y), p.112.
23. M.J. Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal: Culture, Law and Policy in England, 1830–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.93.
24. William Wilberforce expressed this most clearly in his letter to the King of Haiti in October 1818, as reprinted in R.I. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce, (eds), *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce*, vol.1 (London: John Murray, 1840), p.377.
25. For more information on the ideal of women as 'guardians of morality' see C. Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), ch.3.
26. Viscount Goderich in a letter to Sir J.C. Smyth, 25 July 1831, P.P. 1832, xlv, no.3.
27. As cited in P.P. 1830–1, xvi, p.202. A summary of the legal proceedings in the case of Kitty Hylton can be found 'Treatment of a Female Slave', P.P. 1830–1, xvi, pp.201–211.
28. McMahon, *Jamaica Plantership*, pp.52–3.
29. Revd R. Bickell, *The West Indies as they are; or a Real Picture of Slavery* (London: J. Hatchard, 1825), p.49.
30. *The Negro's Memorial or, Abolitionist Catechism by an Abolitionist* (London: Hatchard, 1825), p.60.
31. The term 'purity' was often used by abolitionists as a euphemism for chastity. It featured especially in their debate about interracial and inter-slave relationships.
32. Bleby concluded from her remarks that she suffered from 'matronly modesty'. H. Bleby, *Death Struggles of Slavery: being a Narrative of Facts and Incidents which occurred in a British Colony during the two Years immediately preceding Negro Emancipation* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1853), p. 188.
33. Hodgson, *Truths from the West Indies*, p.145n.
34. See for instance, *Memoirs of Charles Campbell at Present Prisoner in the Jail of Glasgow* (Glasgow: James Duncan and Co., 1828), p.20; J. Campbell, *A letter to Sir Robert Peel, on the Subject of British Colonial Slavery* (Edinburgh: Colster, 1830), p.53; Jackson, *A Memoir of the Rev. John Jenkins*, p. 122, and *A Word from the Bible; Common Prayer Book, and Laws of England on Behalf of Enslaved British Subjects* (London: L.B. Seeley and Sons, 1829), p.55.
35. Trew as cited in Jackson, *A Memoir of the Rev. John Jenkins*, p.113.
36. *Ibid.*, 120.
37. See *A General History of Negro Slavery: collected from the most respectable Evidence and unquestionable Authorities* (Cambridge: Hatfield, 1826), p.88; Trew as cited in Jackson, *A Memoir of the Rev. John Jenkins*, p. 112; and the statements of William Taylor and Robert Young in P.P. 1831–32, xx, pp.56–7 and 428.
38. P.P. 1831–2, xx, pp.56–7. For similar remarks see Trew as cited in Jackson, *A Memoir of the Rev. John Jenkins*, p. 120, and *The Negro's Memorial*, p.60
39. *The Negro's Memorial*, p.60.
40. *A Letter to John Bull to which is Added the Sketch of a Plan for the Safe, Speeding, and Effectual Abolition of Slavery by a Free-born Englishman* (London: Hatchard, 1823), p.12.
41. Captain Marjoribanks, *Slavery: an Essay in Verse* (Edinburgh: J. Robertson, 1802), p.13.
42. The lack of such examples in the 1820s and early 1830s indicates that 'protection' had become a key attribute of the norm of middle-class manhood.
43. [E. Rushton], *West Indian Eclogues* (London: J. Philips, 1787), p.2. Thus like many other early abolitionists, Rushton located the humanity of the slaves not in the ability to reason but in their capacity to feel. For others see Peter Kitson, "'Bales of Living Anguish': Representations of Race and the Slave in Romantic Writing", *English Literary History*, 67, 2 (2000), pp.515–37.
44. For a detailed discussion of this 'man of feeling', see Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism'.
45. Hodgson, *Truths from the West Indies*, p. 144.

46. H. Whiteley, *Excessive Cruelty to Slaves: Three Months in Jamaica in 1832 Comprising a Residence of Seven Weeks on a Sugar Plantation* (London: 1833), p.10. This was one of the most popular abolitionist pamphlets. It sold 200, 000 copies in the first two weeks.
47. Bleby, *Death Struggles*, p.3.
48. See Bickell, *The West Indies as they are*, p.29; *West Indian Eclogues*, p.2; and *A Dialogue between a Well-Wisher*, p.4.
49. See for instance the Slave Trade Committee Report, Vol.82, pp.77 and 205, and *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 4, 74 (February 1831), p. 135. This change was brought about by the planters' wish to increase the slave population. As they were of the opinion that slaves could only be controlled by the use or threat of physical violence, they refused to exempt pregnant women completely from flogging.
50. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, self-control became a major attribute of the norm of civilization. On the civilizing process see (among others) N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process: the History of Manners* (New York, 1978) and P. Spierenburg, *The Broken Spell: A Cultural and Anthropological History of Preindustrial Europe* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991).
51. Hodgson, *Truths from the West Indies*, p.144
52. Whiteley, *Excessive Cruelty*, p.4.
53. Revd B. Godwin, *The Substance of a Course of Lectures on British Colonial Slavery Delivered at Bradford, York and Scarborough* (London: J. Hatchard, 1830), 49. See also *Word from the Bible*, p.55. The more condemning tone towards the planters stemmed from the fact that they justified the system of slavery on the grounds that they behaved liked 'fathers' towards their slaves.
54. P.P. 1830–1, xvi, p.231.
55. Ibid.
56. P.P. 1831–2, xlvii, p.387. Mr. Jackson, a custos of Port Royal, and his wife had abused the women for more than five months before a complaint about their treatment was made to magistrate Dr. A.L. Palmer. He established a Council of Protection in June 1831 that decided that there were no grounds for prosecution. In August 1831 a grand jury threw out a bill of indictment against Mr Jackson. An excellent summary of the Jackson case can be found in W.L. Burn, *Emancipation and Apprenticeship in the British West Indies* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970 reprint), pp.62–4.
57. Goderich also used the term 'unmanly' in his general denunciation of female flogging in a letter to Sir J.C. Smith of 25 July 1831 in P.P. 1832, xlvii, no.3. For an overview of all the attributes of manhood addressed by the abolitionists see Paton, 'Decency, Dependence and the Lash'.
58. See for instance Bleby, *Death Struggles of Slavery*, p.74 and the letter to a local newspaper cited in P.P. 1830–1, xvi, pp.202–3
59. Bridges was rector of Manchester, 1816–23, and St Ann's, 1823–7. He was also the author of *A Voice of Jamaica* (1823); *Dreams of Dulocracy* (1824); *A Statistical Account of the Parish of Manchester in the Island of Jamaica* (1824); and *The Annals of Jamaica* (2 vols., 1828).
60. Bleby, *Death Struggles*, p.74.
61. Ibid., p.188. Another example can be found in Marjoribanks, *Slavery*, p.14
62. Knibb as cited in Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, p.213.
63. The abolitionist remarks about white female tormentors relate primarily to urban women. There were a small number of slave-holding women in the major cities in the island who owned usually less than ten slaves. B.W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean 1807–1834* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 107.
64. Slave Trade Committee Report, Vol.82, p.54.
65. L. Davidoff and C.Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 1992 reprint), p.398.
66. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, ch.2.
67. On various occasions, Mrs Jackson had flogged or ordered the flogging of the women and had also ordered them to be confined in the stocks. 'Copy of all correspondence relative to the punishment of two female slaves belonging to Mr. Jackson', P.P. 1831–2, xlvii, pp.359–93.
68. P.P. 1831–2, xlvii, p.385. *A Word from the Bible* also emphasizes that female tormentors inflicted excessive pain for trivial offences, p.55.
69. Slave Trade Committee Report, Vol.82, pp. 152–4.
70. C. Smith, *The Wanderings of Warwick* (London: J. Bell, 1794), p.54. Like most female antislavery writers, Charlotte Smith concentrated upon female flogging. For more information on the author see M. Ferguson, *British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670–1834* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.3 and 189.

71. J. Campbell, *A Letter to Sir Robert Peel on the Subject of colonial Slavery* (Edinburgh: Colston, 1830), p.53.
72. Bickell as cited in A. Barclay, *A Practical View of the Present State of Slavery in the West Indies* (London: Smith, Elder and Co. 1827), p.446.
73. P.P. 1831–2, *xlvi*, p.385
74. For the white, middle-class norm of manhood see Tosh, *A Man's Place*.
75. Thomas C. Holt's *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain 1832–1938* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) examines in detail the abolitionist notion of a free Jamaica. In their debates, abolitionists expressed the idea that freedom was submission to impersonal forces of the marketplace and constraints of the law; voluntary contracts based on mutual consent; and protection of the law.
76. Catherine Hall has concluded the same for the debate about emancipation in her book *White, Male and Middle Class*, ch.9.

BRAZIL

Customs and Costumes: Carlos Julião and the Image of Black Slaves in Late Eighteenth-Century Brazil

SILVIA HUNOLD LARA

In 1768, arriving in Pernambuco on the way to Bahia to govern the State of Brazil, the Marquis of Lavradio expressed his astonishment at the 'innumerable multitude of blacks' and mulattos – so many that he had difficulty 'finding a man ... who was truly white'.¹ The comment may have been exaggerated, but it finds resonance in the demographic data available for the period. According to a survey of Rio's population conducted in 1779, there were 14,986 slaves and almost 55 per cent of the city's inhabitants were non-white. In some parishes such as São José, whites were only 26 per cent of the local population.² A similar demographic pattern can be found in the city of Salvador, where the 1775 census recorded 35,253 inhabitants (36 per cent white, 22.4 per cent free black and mulatto, and 41.7 per cent slave black and mulatto). The census of 1807, which did not distinguish freeborn from slave, reported 25,502 blacks, 11,350 mulattos, and only 14,260 (28 per cent) whites.³

The disproportionate number of blacks enhances one's awareness of the presence of slavery and gives political significance to the dense concentration of dark-skinned men and women. The 'innumerable multitude of blacks' became a unified and hostile body of people, which was perceived by slave-owners and colonial authorities as a threat. Fear of flights and *quilombos* (runaway communities) was generalized and from at least the end of the seventeenth century, the fierce struggle to destroy the dreaded *quilombo* of Palmares drove slave-owners to devise more efficient mechanisms to control the actions of slaves seeking freedom and to recast their politics of domination. The appearance of the *capitães-do-mato* (bush captains) during the first half of the eighteenth century was one sign of that change in politics.⁴ At the same time, the management of the ethnic make-up of slave stocks also began to look as an attractive mechanism to control and prevent collective action. In order to reduce the 'inconvenient' risk of insurrection, they regarded the mutual hostilities 'between *crioulos* and the others, and the tensions among the different slave-supplying nations along the coast of Africa' as salutary. These tensions would have neutralized that 'frightening league' which resulted from such a heavy concentration of slaves.⁵

In this context, throughout the eighteenth century, the tendency was to

assimilate the social condition (of slavery) to (dark) skin colour. In Portuguese America, white men were naturally considered freeborn, but the same was not true of those of darker complexion. Although the record for the colonial period describes a variety of terms to describe non-whites (e.g. *pardo*, *mulato*, *cafuzo*, *cabra*, *preto* and *africano*), little room was left for ambiguity. It was not unusual for freeborn or freed mulattos to be arrested on suspicion of being slaves. In some cases, several different classificatory terms would be used simultaneously to denote the same person. But even these terms might prove insufficient to define someone's position, and skin colour was often reinforced by the elements of the visual language of social hierarchy.⁶ If whites were undoubtedly associated with liberty, a dark skin presupposed a servile condition or a history of slavery in a not too distant past. Throughout the eighteenth century, the terms *preto* and *negro* (both words mean black) were employed in an increasingly generic way, blending together slave and freed (or even freeborn) men and women to signify an indistinct mass of social inferiors deprived of freedom. Here we can grasp what sort of impact the predominantly dark-skinned population would have had on visitors to eighteenth-century Portuguese America.

This identity between slavery and dark skin has been studied in a variety of ways, but less attention has been paid to the manner in which those social meanings were constructed and operated under specific circumstances. Addressing this question, this article takes as evidence a set of drawings and paintings in watercolour by Carlos Julião, depicting figures and scenes from late eighteenth-century South Central Brazil. My first objective is to take iconography as historical evidence, carefully evaluating and deciphering meanings according to its internal logic and programmatic composition. This has seldom been done in Brazilian historiography. On the contrary, in recent years, several studies on colonial Brazil have accepted Julião's paintings uncritically as evidence throwing light on slave experience and everyday life. Reified and removed from their original context, they have thus been used naively as if they spoke for themselves or could be read in a direct and transparent way. In fact, as this article will try to show, this is far from the case.

Secondly, the analysis being tried here deals with a period in which the subject has only rarely been visited. In the context of the eighteenth-century Portuguese empire, racist ideology was not yet predominant, granting us access to a type of reasoning and a logic of thought in which the differences and inequalities among men and women were not necessarily tied to 'racial' origins or justified by reference to scientific knowledge. Inquiring into that logic and reasoning and trying to decipher its procedures and political implications, we hope to throw light on the process by which racism struck deep roots, growing so vigorously in Brazil.

Finally, this article seeks to understand how the imperial gaze perceives the colonial condition and is aware of the presence of slavery. Taking as evidence a

set of images portraying dark-skinned human figures and looking through the screens that prevent us from seeing them clearly, I discuss how these images can be used to construct a historical interpretation of the slave condition and, more specifically, of the body of the slave in late eighteenth-century Brazil.

There is little biographical information about Carlos Julião. Carlo Giuliani or Juliani was born in Turin, c. 1740, but he is always referred to by his Portuguese name. Like many other contemporary young Europeans, Julião left home in search of fortune. When he was 23 years old, he began a military career in the Portuguese army. An engineer by training, a specialist in metallurgy, mineralogy and chemistry, he lived most of his life within the territories comprising the Portuguese empire, conducting cartographic surveys or inspecting fortifications in India, China and Brazil. He was eventually transferred to Rio de Janeiro together with the Bragança court in the first decade of the nineteenth century, where he lived until his death in 1811 or 1814.⁷

In 1779, Julião almost certainly came to Bahia, where he drew a plan of the fortifications of Salvador and sketched a panoramic view of the city (Figure 3).⁸ He also drew the topographical profile of Rio de Janeiro, which appeared in a set of four vistas, showing, in addition to Rio, the profiles of Goa, Diu and Mozambique (Figure 4).⁹ It was probably in the last quarter of the eighteenth century that he painted a series of 43 illuminated plates which he compiled in an album, entitled *Figurinhos de Brancos e Negros dos Uzos do Rio de Janeiro e Serro do Frio* (figures illustrating the customs of whites and blacks in Rio de Janeiro and Serro do Frio).¹⁰ I proceed first to examine the context in which these images were produced. Then I reconstruct the strategies that informed their production in an attempt to unveil the key to their historical interpretation. Finally, I discuss the specificity of Julião's gaze on the colonial world and comment on the limitations on the use of these sources for the study of slavery in eighteenth-century Brazil.

To draw the view of Salvador, Julião probably relied on a sketch by José Antonio Caldas, who had previously drawn a panoramic view of the city in 1756.¹¹ Following a practice current among artists in the last decades of the eighteenth century, Julião included a list of the city's main buildings (churches, fortifications, palaces, convents etc). This view of Salvador occupies less than a third of the plate. Below it, Julião placed other drawings, arranged in two broad strips of images. In the middle strip, as a competent military engineer, Julião sketched the façades and plans of the nine forts that garrisoned the city. The bottom strip displays scenes and human figures disposed in five frames, whose captions read as follows: 'The manner of dress of the mulatto women in the city of Bahia'; 'Black man selling milk in Bahia'; 'Carriage or litter which the ladies in the city of Salvador of Bahia of All Saints use to go about'; 'Woman dancing *lundu* "*de bimda a cinta*"; and 'The dress of the black Mina women of Bahia, street vendors'.

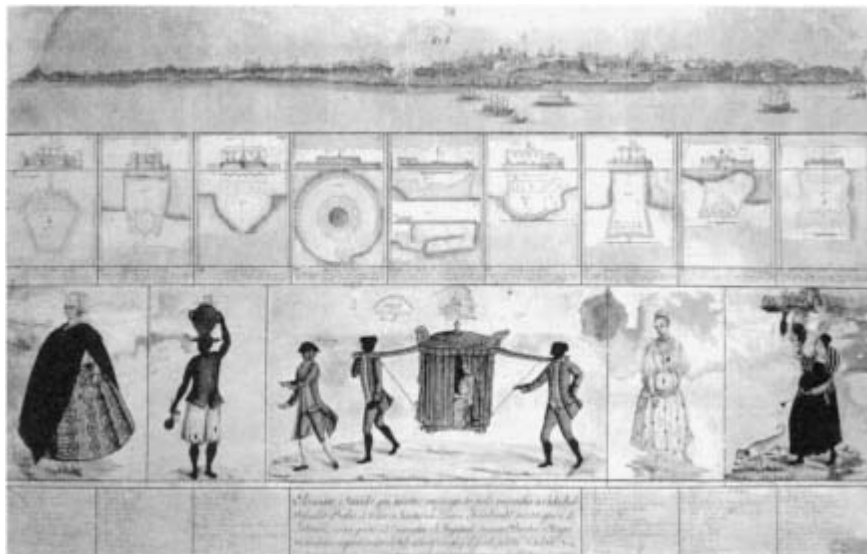


FIGURE 3

ELEVATION AND FAÇADE, SHOWN IN PERSPECTIVE, AS SEEN FROM THE SEA, THE CITY OF SALVADOR BAHIA OF ALL SAINTS IN SOUTHERN AMERICA



FIGURE 4

ENTRY TO THE BAR OF GOA, PROSPECT OF DIU, ENTRY TO RIO DE JANEIRO AND PROSPECT OF MOZAMBIQUE ISLAND

A similar iconographic programme appears in Figure 4, showing, at the top, a set of four panoramic vistas and, below it, also arranged in two broad strips, images of human figures. The legends to the vistas read: ‘Entrance to the bar of Goa’; ‘Diu’s *praça* (citadel), seen from the sea’; ‘Entrance to Rio de Janeiro, seen at half a league from the sea’; and ‘Island of Mozambique, seen from the

harbour'. I am concerned here especially with the images in the upper strip bearing the following explanatory comments: 'A hermit begging alms'; 'A black woman with a tray of sweets and a bottle of water'; 'The black women from Rosário'; 'A hammock in which the Americans are carried to their estates or farms'; 'A black woman carrying dinner in a *cuia* (a bowl resembling a gourd)'; a 'Woman dancing *lundu* "*de bunda a cinta*"; 'A mulatto woman receiving a letter on behalf of her mistress'; 'The dress of savage women'; and, finally, a couple of 'Domesticated Tapuias'. The captions also mention the clothing of the '*nhonhas*' and '*chinas*' of Macau, the 'gentiles' and the '*baye*' of Goa.

In order to illustrate his vistas, Julião adopted representational strategies that can also be found, here and there, in other drawings of the period. From the curricula of the courses in artillery, fortification and bomb-making, which had been taught in Portugal since the mid-seventeenth century, Julião probably took lessons in arithmetic, mathematics and geometry and learned 'how to obtain and draw plans and topographic maps with contours, elevations [and] façades'.¹² It was difficult to get proper training in drawing in Lisbon. Drawing could be learned in the school of civil or military architecture or in connection with manufacturing activities. It is very possible that Julião learned to draw human figures following a traditional method of drawing body parts from conventional models. The apprentice would copy hands, feet, faces and arms over and over again to exhaustion. In Lisbon, the use of live models was restricted in this period, even for civil practitioners of the *beaux-arts*. Such traditional methods would also have been sufficient to prepare someone to draw models wearing uniforms, a practice common among the military.¹³

Julião also partook of an old cartographic tradition of illuminating maps with human allegories that personified the places being represented.¹⁴ More specifically, he may have followed the example of other artists in the army, who illustrated their sketches of forts and harbours with small figurines dressed in the uniforms of local garrisons.¹⁵ Julião's figures, however, not only illustrated the places and plans he sketched on the plate but, with their bright colours and large size, dominate the entire composition. Still, his figurines seem to play the very same role as the uniforms: they helped one to identify the places painted in the panoramic views and, through a depiction of local habits and customs, to recognize the inhabitants of remote lands. This connection is made explicit in the case of Salvador. On this plate (Figure 3), the view of the city and its forts and the captions to the human figurines accompanying it refer exclusively to the Bahian capital.

The association between human figures and places is often made in the cartographic tradition of the period. The same is true of the pictorial representation of *uses and customs*, an iconographie genre that has its roots in the early modern age and whose conventions seem to have guided Julião, s drawings. This mode of representation links places, geographic or social, to

paradigmatic human types. There is clearly a relationship between this iconographie language and Julião's drawings, whose plates devote so much space to human figures. Contrary to the naturalist taxonomy then current in most European academies at that time,¹⁶ his drawings present human types that are recognized by their dress and other material details, such as the attributes of a particular trade, adornments and so on. Representing men and women according to the customs and costumes of a particular place or relating them to a particular activity or social condition, Julião thus constructed generic 'types'. Although these types do not describe empirical observable realities, they nevertheless contain elements which allow one to identify them generically as belonging to particular social groups or as inhabiting a certain place. The nexus devised between human figures and places in Julião's drawings is inherent in the two iconographie traditions intersecting in his work. It can be noted in the title to the set of images in the album portraying the *Uzos* (customs) of Rio and Serro do Frio; in the connection between human figures and geographical locations in [Figure 3](#) and [4](#); and in the legends to the images in the plates.

Let us examine this connection between types and places more carefully. Depicting exotic garments or unfamiliar practices that would attract the attention of Europeans (such as the odd custom of being carried in litters or hammocks), Julião defined what made the colonial world different. The clothing and costumes he represented on his plates were distinct from those of Europeans and found only in the colonies. But at the same time as he recorded differences, portraying diversity, he also blunted them, emphasizing instead what those figures had in common. Julião himself provides the clue to unveil this apparent contradiction. While the title to [Figure 3](#) indicates that the city of Salvador was located in 'Southern America', the legend to the scene with the hammock in [Figure 4](#) explains that the hammock was a device 'in which the Americans were carried to their estates'. More than identifying a specific place whose precise coordinates he included in the title to the plate, Julião's drawings also represent a larger unit: the dominions of the Portuguese in the lands of America. Thus, in a synecdochic play, Bahia or Rio, territories in the Portuguese empire, stood emblematically for the whole, that is, the entire universe of the *Conquistas*, the lands conquered by the Crown and subject to its domination.

Another clue comes from the fact that, in the set with four vistas ([Figure 4](#)), human figures are not always associated with the places he depicts and the captions are not very precise. In contrast to the plate with the vista of Salvador, in [Figure 4](#) only a few of the legends and some iconographie attributes allow us to associate a human figure to a place. Here, I suggest, the images are intended less to instruct and document new discoveries than to reiterate previous knowledge. How do we know if the 'black women of Rosário' belong to Rio de Janeiro or Goa? Why did Julião include a woman wearing the dress of the '*nhonhas* of Macau' if this city is far from any of the four places

represented in the plate? How can we identify the geographical reference to the image bearing the caption 'a black woman carrying dinner in a *cuiá*' or 'mestiza ministering chicken soup'. What was the nature of the connection between human figures and the geographic localities described here?

Before we try to answer these questions, we need to remember that the genre of representation of uses and customs is almost always employed to depict what is already known in advance, translating iconographically common knowledge about human types as they are thought to be. Instead of showing new discoveries or novelties resulting from empirical and direct observation, it reinforces what is already known. In a similar manner, Julião's drawings document the diversity of types and customs that have already been described or referred to in several previous works, reports and drawings dealing with the colonial world and its inhabitants. To be decoded, these images necessitate this previous knowledge. It is necessary to know beforehand that the attributes of the black woman identify her as a resident of the state of Brazil and not the State of India. Just as the topographical profiles drawn in these plates could help sailors to confirm a course defined in advance, the connection between each figure and the locale to which it refers required a type of knowledge that was here only being reiterated.

Julião's figures are clearly distinct from one another, in their posture and dress and sometimes also in their legends. These differences, however, did not prevent them from partaking in the same colonial condition. If, at one level, it is possible to recognize diversity among colonial subjects through the display of customs and costumes, at another, they belong together in the *Conquistas* and are thus equally subordinate to the colonial power. Julião's pictorial narrative results in a degree of generalization that dissolves plurality. These images, therefore, should be interpreted in reference to the wider universe of the colonies rather than to specific localities.

The same type of generalization can be found in official documents composed in that same period, such as the letters dictating norms for all the Portuguese *Conquistas*. For instance, [Chapter 9](#) of the *pragmatica* of 1749, on fabrics, ornaments and sumptuary display,¹⁷ is devoted entirely to 'blacks and mulattos in the *Conquistas*'. Under this rubric fall both slave and freed men and women. The thrust of this decree was to prevent the inconveniences resulting from the usurpation of the signs and inappropriate use of the dress code to express social distinctions in the overseas territories. Here, the physical, social, cultural and geographic differences were subsumed in the colonial condition. Everyone and everything, people and territory, were indiscriminately subjected to the same king and belonged to his overseas dominions.

The enforcement of this decree led to a debate in Goa as to whether it applied there or not,¹⁸ though its inhabitants were far from being considered slaves or freed, blacks or mulattos. More than a reference to race, the phrase 'blacks and mulattos in the *Conquistas*' seems to have described a subordinate

position in a social and political hierarchy, or at least that was how contemporaries understood it. This generalization is found all over the colonial territories and can be compared to the growing practice of indiscriminately describing slaves, freed and free, with the same label, at once social and political.

Thus, the key to interpreting these two compositions combining panoramic views of cities and human figurines lies in the association of human types with places, but not with any specific place. The notion of colonial space (belonging to the *Conquistas* or ‘overseas dominions’), always conceived from the point of view of political domination, imposed a degree of uniformity that smoothed differences and allowed for the same figures to be used in different geographical contexts at the same time. This fact is revealing of other important elements in the interpretation of these images.

The political strategies used in these compositions can perhaps be better understood by comparing the figures described above with those in the album on Rio and Serro do Frio. The album contains a set of 43 watercolours showing isolated scenes arranged side by side. They depict women wearing elaborate garments, men in military uniform, an allegory showing a triumphal arch, festive occasions, work scenes and other rhetorical images (a soldier’s farewell, a gallant old man [cf. the beggar in [Figure 3](#)] and so on).¹⁹ Context is reduced to a minimum – the figures appear standing on the ground, upon which a few leaves or rocks have also been painted, as in [Figure 5](#), or, sometimes, next to a dog or a small bush.²⁰ Here, however, contrary to the images hitherto discussed, there are no textual elements to help us identify them; only the title to the album connects these figures to a particular region, but again not to any specific place. In addition, these images depict mostly blacks, who appear in 21 of the 43 plates in the album dedicated to Rio and Serro do Frio, as they do in four of the five frames in [Figure 3](#), and in five of the nine scenes pertaining to Rio in [Figure 4](#).



In the album, human figures are drawn in the same style, following the same pattern of representation of the human body we have already encountered in [Figures 3](#) and [4](#). They appear isolated and static, with conventional gestures and postures that function as a support for the representation of attire (16 plates) and military uniforms (five plates). The exception is one set of four plates showing work scenes in the diamond-mining districts, as can be seen in [Figure 6](#). Here, workers are set in a geographic context, embedded in a landscape that does not function as background but helps to compose the picture. These mining scenes fall far from the iconographic genre of representation of *customs*; the composition receives a more detailed treatment and the bodies of slaves show movement and volume.



FIGURE 6

FIGURES ILLUSTRATING THE CUSTOMS OF WHITES AND BLACKS IN RIO DE JANEIRO AND SERRO DO FRIO (PLATE XL)

Otherwise, the figures shown in these three sets of images are very similar. Nothing distinguishes the black women illustrating the panoramic view of Salvador from those in the album from Rio: they wear the same type of skirt, drape their shawls in the same manner and wrap their turbans in a similar way. The only difference between the woman dancing the *lundu* from Bahia (Figure 3) and the one from Rio (Figure 4) is the use of a necklace and a scapular in the place of scarf around the neck. In fact, the same occurs with several images illustrating the view of Salvador and, likewise, depicted in the album on Rio and Serro do Frio. For instance, the slaves carrying a Bahian lady

in a litter are identical to those in a plate from that album. The caption to the beautiful black woman illustrating the vista of Salvador reads: 'Dress of the black Mina women of Bahia, street vendors' (Figure 3). Yet the woman is dressed in the same way and carries the same objects in another plate in the album on Rio (Figure 7). Thus, the image would appear to be either the product of an exercise in the representation of dress associated, as in Figure 3, with a specific activity (street vending) in a particular place (the city of Salvador in Bahia) or part of a more generic composition, showcasing the customs and costumes typical of South Central Brazil, as in Figure 7. Among other similarities, one of the plates in the album on Rio de Janeiro and Serro do Frio (Figure 8) reproduces two images that appear in the other compositions: the image of the 'black woman with a tray of sweets and a bottle of water' in Figure 4 and the figure of the 'black man who sells milk in Bahia' in Figure 3.



FIGURE 7

FIGURES ILLUSTRATING THE CUSTOMS OF WHITES AND BLACKS IN RIO DE JANEIRO AND SERRO DO FRIO (PLATE XXXIII)

How do we explain this apparent carelessness with geographical determination, when this mode of representation seeks to associate human types with geographic and political places (generic or specific)? This question leads us to enquire into the underpinnings of a mode of representation which, in an apparent paradox, blurs the distinctions between human types associated with specific locales and uses similar or identical figures to signify different places. Everything would lead us to think that these images faithfully

reproduce information obtained through empirical observation. The figures would indeed depict the customs and costumes of different parts in the *Conquistas*. But this conclusion does not sustain itself when we take into account the way in which the iconographie language functions to generate these images. In other words, although the human figures are impressive images taking up most of the plates, one should not read them in isolation, removing them from the narrative and iconographie contexts in which they were produced. Those questions become even more interesting when we consider that the greater number of slaves in Bahia and in South Central Brazil came from different regions in Africa.



FIGURE 8

FIGURES ILLUSTRATING THE CUSTOMS OF WHITES AND BLACKS IN RIO DE JANEIRO AND SERRO DO FRIO (PLATE XXXII)

In the last decades of the eighteenth century, the majority of slaves entering the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro came from the Congo-Angolan region.²¹ Although Africans from other parts of West Africa, especially the Coast of Mina (the term the Portuguese used to identify the coast between the River Volta and the Bay of Benin as far as Lagos), could also be found in Rio and other places in South Central Brazil,²² Central Africa was far better represented, demographically and culturally.²³ By contrast, the majority of slaves brought to Salvador came from West Africa. True, Africans originating in Luanda, Cabinda and Benguela also came to Bahia until traffic was

terminated in 1850, but since 1780 the volume of captives imported from the Coast of Mina and the Gulf of Benin was three times higher than that from subequatorial Africa.²⁴ My purpose here is not to revisit the well-known opposition between Bantu and Sudanese which scholars have already called into question,²⁵ but rather to call attention to important cultural differences between the slave population in Rio and Bahia. There were naturally Mina slaves in Rio and Angolan Africans in Bahia, and although these groups were minority, they nevertheless left their cultural imprint on many important institutions in each of these cities (such as the black brotherhoods of Angolan in Bahia and Mina in Rio). But they were not culturally or ethnically hegemonic in either of those cities.

Julião seems partially to detect those distinctions, since he clearly identifies one of the women in [Figure 3](#) as '*preta Mina da Bahia*' (black Mina woman of Bahia). In fact, here there is a triple identification. He calls her a *preta* (black woman) – that is, since that was the usual meaning of the term in that period, a slave, and probably an African. He notes her origin with the word *Mina*, indicating that she came from the Coast of Mina. And he also tells that she is o/Bahia. This third element would suggest that the fact that she was a slave in Bahia was perhaps more important than her African origin. Or, more pointedly, that the phrase 'black Mina woman,' which so often appears in other documents of this period, designates a woman who was brought as a slave to Bahia or is a slave *in* Bahia. In both cases, however, the slave condition is the most relevant factor, and the woman's identification as Mina has less ethnic significance than might appear at first sight. It was perhaps on account of this that she was also included among the images of the album of Rio de Janeiro and Serro do Frio ([Figure 7](#)).

In order to deepen our analysis, let us now turn to a group of images from the album that focus on the same theme and use the same representational strategies. Eleven plates out of 20 deal with feminine attire. In this set of images, we find no substantial differences between the dress of black and white women, even though the elements indicating distinctions in social rank or cultural origin are also represented. Almost all the women dress in long rounded skirts and blouses and wear cloaks. Fabrics vary from dark and cheap *baetão* (a coarse fabric made of cotton and wool) to embroidered damask. There are also different types of blouses (short or long, open or closed corselets) and cloaks (cape, mantle, overcoat).

Hammer-Stroeve has argued that these images should be read as a narrative structured in terms of an opposition between formality and informality, differentiating the figurines according to categories informed by social status and colour of the skin.²⁶ Indeed, Julião's figures highlight social differences and reveal a hierarchical distinction between wealth and poverty. The similarities between white and black female figures, in the way they are depicted and their clothing, recall the importance of the visual language of dress to denote rank in the social hierarchy of the Portuguese *ancien régime*.

Both black and white women wear the elements of dress that distinguished the world of masters (shoes with buckles, coats and hats), and both use shawls and cloaks, displaying modesty. These attributes put these women on a level where both of them could be equally identified as ladies. Likewise, the rules for pictorial representation of the body led the artist to paint gestures, postures and volumes which were identical for blacks and whites. In these figures, both the visual language of dress and the iconographical conventions cut across racial differences, disregarding the association between black skin and slavery already often made in the late eighteenth century.



FIGURE 9

FIGURES ILLUSTRATING THE CUSTOMS OF WHITES AND BLACKS IN RIO DE JANEIRO AND SERRO DO FRIO (PLATE XXVI)

At the same time, however, this set of images can be read in a way that contradicts this ‘equalization’ and subverts any attempt at a simplistic analysis. Figure 9 provides the best example. Here, nudity, body marks, adornments and attire reveal an enormous distance from Western standards. The contrast with the previous figures is striking. But even more remarkable is the fact that these women are not devalued. The exotic look, marking differences, and the use of rich ornaments project a sense of nobility and pride. The rules of the genre of representation of ‘customs and costumes’ seem to have prevailed over social distinction. Thus, in Julião’s paintings, Western Portuguese standards and the exotic ‘African’ constitute a second field of opposites, where *difference* is

marked in disregard to hierarchy or value judgement. Although no white woman appears dressed as the ones in [Figure 9](#), the pictorial narrative and the rules of the genre create an ambience of neutrality which invites us to consider the possibility that black and white women could have exchanged positions.²⁷ The difference here is in the order of culture: the African woman, the other, might become Western if she were to adopt new customs and costumes.

This neutrality, however, is by no means indifferent to the presence of slavery, conspicuously signalled in these images through the representation of work. Other elements also distinguish free from slave. If both black and white women wear hats, turbans or even the two combined, only white (and free) women wear socks and shoes. Black women wear simple slippers, no socks and go unshod. They also usually appear in work situations, clearly indicating their condition as slaves or their proximity to slavery. In these scenes, all female figures, black or Indian, appear barefoot, except for two who wear slippers. These marks of distinction reiterate the symbolic connection between footwear and liberty, which has been documented in a variety of sources for the duration of slavery.²⁸ In Julião's paintings, bare feet and work, together with simple and cheap dress, identify the slave. [Figure 10](#) is the most conspicuous example, where the servile condition is reinforced by the presence of the *libambo* (an iron collar used to punish fugitives) and the *peia* (an iron cuff fastened to the ankle).

According to these criteria, it is possible clearly to distinguish between freed and slave in these images. While the former always appear in postures typical of the genre of customs, the latter are shown with the attributes of a trade, carrying baskets and trays as in [Figure 7](#). At the same time, however, it is important to note that the clothing of black women contains a mixture of African and Western elements. Thus, the slave woman in [Figure 7](#) wears a shirt with lacework which contrasts sharply with the cheap skirt of dark *baetão* and her unshod feet. In [Figure 11](#), the slippers, hat, double cloak and the rosary signal this freedwoman's distancing from seigniorial domination. And while in [Figure 7](#) the turban, the pipe, the piece of cloth used to carry children and, above all, the scarifications on the skin identify this slave woman as African, in [Figure 11](#) the freedwoman's turban and amulets remind us of her effective or ancestral origins.



FIGURE 10

FIGURES ILLUSTRATING THE CUSTOMS OF WHITES AND BLACKS IN RIO DE JANEIRO AND SERRO DO FRIO (PLATE XXXIV)

In and of themselves, the African elements in these images do not indicate the condition of slavery. Julião's brush seems to have moved according to a double criterion of differentiation, opposing on the one hand Western and African and, on the other, master and slave. The two sets of oppositions may be associated or intertwined, but one is not reduced to the other. The exoticism of the African woman in [Figure 7](#) is not associated with slavery. Likewise, African items (such as turbans) worn by white women tell us nothing about their social condition. At the same time, we also find images representing slavery with no reference to African elements, as in the scenes of mining ([Figure 6](#)), which unequivocally denote collective compulsory labour under the master's whip. It is probably because of their contents that these paintings strike such a contrast with the rest of the set, even from the point of view of their iconographie programme.



FIGURE 11

FIGURES ILLUSTRATING THE CUSTOMS OF WHITES AND BLACKS IN RIO DE JANEIRO AND SERRO DO FRIO (PLATE XXVII)

Arranging these images in a geometrically structured framework according to system of binary opposites, Julião's distant imperial gaze identifies social and culturally diverse 'types', recognized by their attire, attributes and situation. Yet, at the same time and only in an apparent paradox, he disregards this diversity, smoothing their differences and removing them from the properly historical contexts of the slave experience. We are dealing with a pictorial narrative that produces a double generalization; first, by describing paradigmatic types, and second, by blurring the distinctions among them, emphasizing their colonial condition.

Julião's figures, therefore, can hardly represent scenes in the daily lives of slaves, if indeed such an image exists that can do that. The slave remains hidden from us and locked in a body that is, before anything, black. Although in the drawings we identify elements of the slave experience in eighteenth-century Brazil (e.g. bare feet, work tools or tools for punishment), the

iconographie grammar prevents us from seeing any descriptive precision in ethnic or social terms. Undoubtedly, Julião is far from the racist reading that will definitively assimilate blacks to the experience of slavery. In his images, however, we notice how slavery acquires specific social meaning which, once combined with the growing and generalized suspicion against blacks, helped to create conditions favourable for racism to strike deep and permanent roots in Brazil. Incorporated in the visual language of social hierarchy, a dark skin colour was associated to customs typical of the majority of the colonial population. And in the strokes of this artist-engineer, we find the same bewilderment that the Marquis of Lavradio expressed as they faced the 'innumerable multitude of blacks' and mulattos in Pernambuco.

Yet we should not rush to simplistic conclusions. The generalization revealed in the ease with which the same figures could appear in different contexts in three iconographie compositions brings Julião near to and, at the same time, far from his contemporary, the naturalist Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira. His scientific expedition was sponsored by and subordinated to the interests of the Crown; the aims of his journey to Brazil were clearly defined: to reconnoitre, record and announce his discoveries to the Royal Academy of Sciences and to the Ministry of Overseas Dominions and Affairs.²⁹

In his writings on and drawings of Amazonian Indians, Ferreira leaves aside the comfortable preconceptions that informed his view on the world and reflects on human differences, confronting universalistic and particularistic perceptions. Yet, in his *Observações geraes e particulares sobre a classe dos mammaes* (general and particular observations on the class of the mammals),³⁰ mixing together Linnaeus and Buffon, he describes the Indian as an imagined and universal type. Here, too, differences in habits and customs are disregarded and amalgamated into the generic traits associated with the 'American'.³¹

In contrast to Julião, Ferreira belonged to a scientific community and shared the principles of contemporary scientific inquiry. Both, however, were subordinate to metropolitan interests and to an administrative and imperial logic which informed their generalizing procedure as they observed the population in the colonies. This suggests that the repetitions found in Julião's watercolours were not accidental, the result of carelessness or imprecision. Nor can they simply be explained as a practice inherent to the representation of customs. Rather, they result from a political posture that informs his gaze and cannot be dissociated from the images he produced.

For these reasons, it is worth stressing, Julião's figures can neither be used to illustrate scenes of daily life nor to study the body of the slave. Instead of documenting slave experience or describing their daily activities, they project an imperial gaze. They are the product of a political process that generalizes about geographical particularities and social specificities, assigning places and people to subordinate positions. Julião's drawings should not be used as a source for studying the body of the slave, less because they reiterate the

representation of static models of the human body than because of the way in which the iconographic language that produces them is encoded. At best, they represent the generic body of blacks in the *Conquistas*, signalling the double blurring of social differences (between slaves, freed and freeborn) and diversity among colonials.

Indeed, the representation of customs and costumes played an important role in the texts and drawings of such men as Julião and Ferreira, but their procedures can only be understood in the context of colonial domination. Generalizing and disregarding differences from the perspective of the metropolis, Julião's procedure cannot be simply read as an objective description. Although he recorded practices, objects and ways of life, these images cannot be interpreted as an attempt at ethnography in the modern sense. To dissociate these figures from the iconographic context of their production, to ignore the fact that they are imbedded in a structured narrative that confers them precise meaning is to proceed anachronistically. The challenge that emerges from this discussion is the invitation to decode these images *over and against* the artist's intentions and procedures. But this is another (long) story.

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Figures 3–11 are reproduced courtesy of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional (National Library Foundation, Brazil)) and the Gabinete de Estudos Arqueológicos de Engenharia Militar (Portuguese Military Archive).

NOTES

1. 'Carta de amizade a meu tio o arcebispo regedor em 21 de julho de 1768...', *Cartas da Bahia, 1768–1769* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 1972), pp.33–4.
2. 'Resumo total da população que existia no anno de 1779...', *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, 21 (1858), pp.216–17.
3. J.J. Reis, *Rebelião Escrava no Brasil* (S Paulo: Brasiliense, 1986), pp.14–15. S.B. Schwartz states that in Bahia 'by the beginning of the nineteenth century, about one-third of the captaincy's 500,000 inhabitants were enslaved, but in sugar-plantation zones, that proportion sometimes reached as high as 70 per cent'. *Sugar Plantation in the Formation of Brazilian Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.338.
4. Cf. S.H. Lara, 'Do singular ao plural: Palmares, capitães-do-mato e o governo dos escravos', in: J.J. Reis and F.S. Gomes (eds), *Liberdade por um Fio* (S Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996), pp.81–109.
5. See L.S. Vilhena, *Recopilação de Notícias Soteropolitanas e Brasileiras* [1802] (Bahia: Imprensa Oficial do Estado, 1921), pp.53–4 and 134.
6. See S.H. Lara, 'The Signs of Color: Women's Dress and Racial Relations in Salvador and Rio de

- Janeiro, ca.1750–1815', *Colonial Latin American Review*, 6, 2 (1997), pp.205–24.
7. See C. Burdet, 'Il colonello Julião: um versatille e avventuroso torinese nel Portogallo del XVIII secolo', *Studi Piemontesi*, XV, 1 (1986), pp. 197–200, and preface by L.F.F. Cunha to the modern edition of the album *Riscos Iluminados de Figurinhos de Brancos e Negros dos Uzos do Rio de Janeiro e Serro do Frio* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Nacional, 1960), pp.ix–xi.
8. 'Elevasam, e fasada, que mostra em prospeto pela marinha a cidade de Salvador Bahia de todos os Santos na America Meridional (...) tirado por Carlos Julião Capitam de Mineiros do Regimento de Artilharia da Corte na ocasião que foi na Nao N. Sra. da Madre de Deus em maio 1779'. [Elevation and façade, shown in perspective, as seen from the sea, of the city of Salvador Bahia of All Saints in Southern America ... obtained by Carlos Julião Captain of the Mine-makers in the Regiment of Artillery of the Court, on the occasion when he was on the ship N. Sra. da madre de Deus, May 1779]. The original belongs to the Gabinete de Estudos Arqueológicos de Engenharia Militar, Lisbon.
9. The original belongs to the Gabinete de Estudos Arqueológicos de Engenharia Militar, Lisbon, no title, date or signature. The catalogue entitled *A Engenharia Militar no Brasil e no Ultramar português Antigo e moderno* (Lisboa: Catálogo da Exposição, 1960) does not identify the author or the date for the document, but N.G. Reis attributes the authorship to Carlos Julião, dating it to 1779. See N.G. Reis, *Vilas e Cidades do Brasil Colonial* (S Paulo: Edusp/Fapesp, 2000), p. 181.
10. This album, whose original is in the National Library in Rio de Janeiro, is part of a larger set, to which also belong the following items: 'Notícia Summaria do Gentilismo da Asia com dez Riscos Iluminados' (containing texts and watercolours describing aspects of Brahmanism) and the 'Ditos de Vasos e Tecidos Peruvianos' (plates of Incan vases and textiles 'modelled on the originals found in the Spanish galleon that drifted to the coast of Peniche [Portugal], loaded with silver, in the reign of D. Maria I'). The set bears no signature or date. L.F.F. Cunha dates the album post-1776, based on an analysis of the allegories shown in one of its plates. J.W. Rodrigues, in a manuscript attached in 1949 to the cover of the document, suggests 1770 as a *terminus post quem* for the composition of the album, based on the date for the creation of these military cohorts.
11. J.A. Caldas, *Notícia Geral de Toda esta Capitania da Bahia desde o seu Descobrimento até o Presente Ano de 1759*. (Salvador: Tipografia Beneditina, facsimile, 1951). This topographical profile became a model for later surveys conducted in the second half of the eighteenth century. Cf. Reis, *Vilas e Cidades*, pp.44–6 e 317–8.
12. Cf. N.O. Cavalcanti, 'A Cidade de S. Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro', (Ph.D. thesis, UFRJ, 1997), especially pp.453–82; and B.P.S. Bueno, 'A iconografia dos engenheiros militares no século XVIII', *Universo Urbanístico Português, 1415* (Lisboa: CNCDP, 1998), pp.89–118.
13. J.A. França, *Une Ville des Lumières* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1965), especially Chapter 4.
14. A good example are the margins of the *Africa Nova Descriptio* by W.J. Blaeu, 1630. On this subject, see S. Alpers, *The Art of Describing* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1983), especially Chapter 4. See also H. Marchitello, 'Political Maps: The Production of Cartography and Chorography in Early Modern England', in M.J.M. Ezell and K. O'Brien O'Keeffe (eds), *Cultural Artefacts and the Production of Meaning* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 13–40.
15. For instance, in 'Planta da Vila Boa Capital da Capitania Geral de Goyás' drawn in 1782 by soldier Manoel Ribeiro Guimarães. The *Planta* depicts the village's profile bearing a caption identifying its buildings; the façade of the governor's palace; and six figurines in military uniforms of the local garrisons. Cf. Reis, *Vilas e Cidades*, pp.240 and 388.
16. Cf. B. Smith, 'Art in the service of science and travel', in idem, *Imagining the Pacific* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 1–49.
17. *Appendix das Leys Extravagantes, Decretos e Avisos, que se tern Publicado do Anno de 1747 até o Anno de 1760 ...* (Lisbon: Mosteiro de São Vicente de Fora, 1760), pp. 19–24.
18. The officers of the *câmara* (municipal council) of the city of Goa asked, c. 1780, that the decree be not applied there. See 'Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino de 12 de dezembro de 1781', Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, Cod. 921, fl.55v.
19. In her edition, L.F.F. Cunha composes captions for these images, explaining many of them, but she does not mention the sources used to obtain that information. For an analysis of some of these plates, see S. Escorel, 'Vestir Poder e Poder Vestir' (MA thesis, UFRJ, 2000), especially Chapter 4.
20. Escorel, 'Vestir Poder e Poder Vestir', finds significance in the way the images were arranged on the plate. She suggests that the figures were ordered according to a hierarchical pattern, which assigns the right side of the page to the person of higher rank.
21. M.G. Florentino, *Em Costas Negras* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 1995), pp.29 and 45–6.
22. M.C. Soares, *Devotos da Cor* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2000).

23. M. Karasch argues that, for the period between 1795 and 1811, 96.2 per cent of the slaves imported to Rio came from Central Africa, departing from Angolan ports. See *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1850* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), especially Chapter 1, and R.W. Slenes, *Na Senzala uma Flor* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1999), pp.14–15.
24. S.B. Schwartz, *Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society*, pp.339–45, and M.I.C. Oliveira, 'Quem eram os negros da guiné? A origem dos africanos na Bahia', *Afro-Ásia*, 19/20(1997), p.42.
25. For an overview on the subject, see Oliveira, 'Quem eram os negros da guiné?' and S. Capone, 'Entre Yoruba et Bantou: l'influence des stéréotypes raciaux dans les études afro-américaines', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 157, 40–1 (2000), pp.55–77.
26. T. Hammer-Stroeve, *De braziliaanse Tekeningen van Carlos Julião* (Heiloo: 1986, mimeograph, in the National Library in Rio de Janeiro), and 'Civiele Kleding in Koloniaal en Koninklijk Brazilië (1700–1821)', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1983. The author's main purpose is to show that the genesis of the typical Brazilian dress takes place in the informal sphere.
27. This neutrality does not only derive from the intended scientific character of the classificatory system in the natural sciences, as M.L. Pratt has shown in her *Imperial Eyes* (London: Routledge, 1992).
28. On the contrary, in the late eighteenth century, the habit of wearing shoes had already spread in Portuguese cities, even among workers. Cf. N.L. Madureira, *Lisboa. Luxo e Distinção, 1750–1830* (Lisbon: Editorial Fragmentos, 1990), pp.22–34.
29. On Ferreira and other contemporary scientific expeditions, see W.J. Simon, *Scientific Expeditions in the Portuguese Overseas Territories (1783–1808)* (Lisbon: Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 1983); and R. Raminelli, 'Ciência e Colonização. Viagem Filosófica de Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira', *Tempo*, 3, 6 (1998), pp. 157–82.
30. Written in 1790, the original is in the National Library in Rio de Janeiro, Manuscript Section, Cod. I–21, 1, 11.
31. Cf. A.D. de Carvalho, Jr., 'Do Índio Imaginado ao Índio Inexistente' (MA thesis, Unicamp, 2000).

African Abrahams, Lucretias and Men of Sorrows: Allegory and Allusion in the Brazilian Anti-slavery Lithographs (1827–1835) of Johann Moritz Rugendas

ROBERT W. SLENES

The burial procession, rising into view from the valley below, has halted for the priest to read from his book of ritual (Figure 12). The dark skin of the deceased and of the mourners, together with the palm trees on the left, remind the early-nineteenth-century observer that this is not Europe, despite the Italianate church dome in the distance. Indeed, the legend to this lithograph identifies its subject as the ‘Burial of a Black Man in [Salvador] Bahia’. This is the last of 100 illustrations in J.M. Rugendas’s *Malerische Reise in Brasilien* (‘Artistic Travels in Brazil’), a book published in instalments, in separate German and French editions, between 1827 and 1835.¹

‘Black’ (*neger*), as used by Bavarian artist Rugendas, has the meaning that was current in Brazil at the time; Portuguese *negro*, while denoting colour, strongly connoted ‘African’, ‘slave’ or ‘ex-slave’. Whether or not the deceased in this picture is a bondsman, his simple bier indicates modest status. Yet he has clearly ‘died well’. His body merits the attendance of a priest, several acolytes, pall-bearers dressed in their ‘Sunday best’ and a substantial cortège. Furthermore, it is not destined for the municipal field (located in the valley, far to the right), where indigents and most slaves were interred; thus it must have been en route to a church or churchyard for consecrated burial.²

Rugendas, however, is not concerned here only with ethnographic accuracy. He insists on associating the corpse of the ‘black man’ with another body: that of the suffering Christ, the ‘Saviour’ honoured by the city’s name. Shown explicitly on the crucifix at the head of the procession and implicitly in an acolyte’s banner bearing the sign of the skull (symbol of Golgotha, the place of the Crucifixion), Christ’s body is present above all in the church of ‘Our Lady of Mercy’ (*Piedade*, or *Pietà*), which presides in the background, metaphorically bringing the Virgin, mourning her Son, centre stage.³ The ‘black man’ here has not just died ‘in Christ’; he has become the ‘Man of Sorrows’ – a striking image, particularly given its place in the sequence of Rugendas’s prints. *Artistic Travels* is organized in a Humboldtian manner, first presenting Brazilian ‘landscapes’ (human beings in the natural environment)

and then focusing on people, with sections devoted sequentially to 'portraits and dress', 'manners and customs of the Indians', 'European life' and finally 'manners and customs of the blacks'. Why does Rugendas leave the section on blacks/Africans/slaves to the end, and why does he want the Christianized 'black man' – indeed, the 'black man' subsumed to the suffering Christ – to be the last image the reader receives from Brazil?



FIGURE 12

'BURIAL OF A BLACK MAN IN BAHIA' (JOHANN MORITZ RUGENDAS)

The lithographs in *Artistic Travels* have usually been regarded as mimetic in character, based (as their legends insist) on sketches 'drawn from life'. Indeed, Rugendas spent three years in Brazil (1822–25) as the artist in a Russian scientific mission led by naturalist G.H. von Langsdorff. Although he broke with Langsdorff shortly before returning to Europe, his Brazilian work reflected his employer's concern for accurate representation of mankind in nature, as well as his own solid artistic training.⁴ The combination much impressed the doyen of naturalists at the time, Alexander von Humboldt, on whose recommendation the *Artistic Travels* was published.⁵ The book's prints, for their part, largely remained true to Rugendas's final pictures; clearly, the artist closely supervised the lithographers.⁶ Thus, one may properly speak of 'Rugendas's lithographs', even though he signed his name to only three of them.

Yet, despite the artist's concern for accuracy, I argue here that the *Malerische Reise* was more of a 'lamp', directed with political intent, than it was a 'mirror'. Rugendas had an intellectual and artistic agenda that guided his

‘documentary’ work and that must be understood before his scenes may be safely scanned for other purposes. An examination of the subjects and sequence of his prints in conjunction with his text (written by his friend and collaborator, the journalist Victor Aimé Huber⁷) demonstrates the artist’s repudiation of the slave trade and slavery, his defence of the ‘moral character’ of Africans and his optimism for the future of Brazil as a racially mixed nation. A close reading of ‘Burial of a Black Man’ and other lithographs that highlight the suffering bodies of male and female slaves then reveals the central place of allusion and allegory in his argument. By associating Africans with biblical moral figures and perhaps a classical heroine, Rugendas exalted them as worthy founders of the new Brazilian nation. Yet, his unusual images, conceived in Paris largely between 1826 and 1828, did not express a radical political vision; rather, they expounded a conservative Christian reformism that was typical of mainstream French anti-slavery thought of the time.

The illustrations regarding ‘the manners and customs of the blacks’ begin with a dramatic portrayal of the Middle Passage. In ‘Blacks in the Ship’s Hold’ (Figure 13), the frequent dearth of water on the slavers, referred to explicitly in the text of *Artistic Travels*, is personified in the African who is straining to obtain drink through the hatch and in the dead body being removed by sailors; indeed, ‘lack of water’ is transformed by these figures into a powerful metonym of desperation and death. Subsequent prints then follow Africans from their disembarkation in a Brazilian port to their sale in a slave market, their trip into the interior of the country and their integration into the slave quarters on their new owner’s estate. In other scenes, bondspeople are portrayed working hard – and being punished – in rural, then urban contexts. ‘Black’ dances and amusements are shown next: the *batuque*, the *lundu* and the ‘game’ (martial art) of *capoeira*. Although these are clearly of African origin, Rugendas’s interpretation of them is that of English traveller Henry Koster, whose book *Travels in Brazil* (1816) he quotes at length. Koster believed that Africans were rapidly being assimilated into a new Luso-Brazilian culture. Dances brought by the slaves ‘are now as much the national dances of Brazil as they are of Africa’. Furthermore, cultural borrowings between masters and slaves bring ‘the superior and his inferior ... closer together’. Rugendas adopts the same viewpoint elsewhere in his book, by showing people of the master class dancing a *lundu* in front of a plantation ‘big house’; clearly, the ‘black’ *lundu* of the last section must be seen in this context.⁸

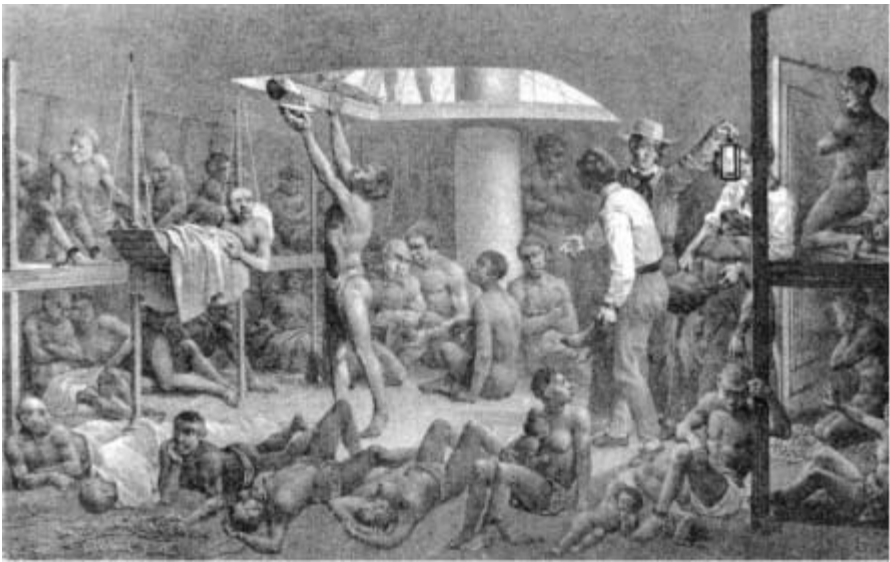


FIGURE 13
‘BLACKS IN THE SHIP’S HOLD’ (J.M. RUGENDAS)

Indeed, the penultimate illustration in the book (Figure 14), portraying the ‘Festival of Our Lady of the Rosary, patroness of the blacks’, with its ‘King and Queen of Congo’ elected by the Rosary brotherhood’s members, makes Koster’s influence explicit. For Koster, such holidays, even with their ‘Congo’ royalty, had the effect of distancing Africans ‘from any thought of the customs of their own country’. Luso-Catholic Christianity, he argued, rapidly brought Africans under the aegis of European civilization, unlike English Protestantism in the Caribbean. Rugendas cites Koster on this question in his text, making the same comparison with the English colonies, and then transforms argument into image. He shows the King and Queen of Congo wearing European clothes (a detail stressed by Koster) and places a Catholic church prominently in the background. The point is reiterated in the final ‘Burial of a black man in Bahia’, where integration into Christianity appears complete. By the time Rugendas’s readers reached this point, however, the book’s text had informed them that manumission was common in Brazil and that freed people of colour had some access to social mobility. As a result, they probably concluded that the protagonist of this lithograph had not only ‘died well’ spiritually, but also socially – at the very least as a freedman.⁹



FIGURE 14

'FESTIVAL OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY, PATRONESS OF THE BLACKS' (J.M. RUGENDAS)

With some reflection, Rugendas's readers also would have perceived that he had taken them 'full spiral', to the original point of departure but at a higher level in the story: for the Christian death of the 'black man' in Bahia is implicitly contrasted to the death of the African in the initial slave ship. The text explains this opposition, still echoing Koster: 'One may think it strange to find among the blacks [Africans] of Brazil so few traces of the religious ideas and customs of their country; but in this fact ... one sees proof that for the blacks *the crossing which takes them to America is a veritable death*' [my italics]. In Brazil, however, Africans 'begin a new life', and 'rapidly become devout Christians'. In sum, the dead man in the ship's hold is not just a metonym for the horrors of the slave trade; he also represents the original African's social and cultural death. In contrast, the final burial in Bahia portrays the black's rebirth in Brazil, now incorporated into free society under the sign of European civilization and Christianity.¹⁰

The argument may sound familiar: when, in 1933, Gilbert Freyre formulated his thesis about the acculturative nature of Brazilian Catholicism, he based his conclusions heavily on Koster.¹¹ Yet, neither Koster nor Rugendas had Freyre's concern with constructing an integrative Luso-Brazilian 'tropicalism' as a final objective. If they gave Brazil and the English Caribbean different scores on their acculturative powers, they did this primarily as a strategy for demonstrating the 'moral capacity' of Africans and their descendants: that is, the capability of these people to assume work responsibilities, feel the higher sentiments of family love and altruism and assimilate Christianity.¹²

To be sure, both Koster and Rugendas took pains to represent themselves as dispassionate observers. Rugendas's text, for instance, advocates gradual not sudden abolition for Brazil. Furthermore, although he rejects racist arguments for the defence of slavery, he also distances himself from those 'philanthropists' (meaning the Abbé Gregoire, widely considered a social radical) who affirmed the total intellectual and moral equality of Africans and Europeans. In fact, Rugendas even declares that 'every day things occur which, putting aside the advantage of civilization, prove the real and physical superiority of whites over blacks'. At the same time, however, he leaves open 'the possibility that "blacks" may one day become equal to whites in every respect'.¹³ The two phrases are not contradictory, when examined in the light of the dominant theory of the time regarding human origins: that which affirmed both 'monogenesis' (common ancestry), and 'recent' creation. As the historian Philip Curtin observes:

With polygenesis disposed of, it was necessary to assume that these 'inferior races' had become inferior at some finite point in time – and not long ago, since the creation itself was thought to be only a few millennia away. If their 'inferiority' had been acquired so quickly, it might disappear with equal speed.¹⁴

Indeed, evidence that Rugendas viewed racial natures as fluid and 'blacks' as ontologically close to Europeans, can be found elsewhere in the text and particularly in his illustrations. Evoking contemporary ideas about the malleability of racial characteristics under the influence of climate and environment, Rugendas asserts that 'Crioulos' (blacks born in Brazil) are proof that the 'African race' has improved in the New World, not only 'spiritually' but also 'physically'.¹⁵ He illustrates this idea in his portrayal of the Rosary festival (Figure 14), where several blacks to the left of the King of Congo, in a group which rises above the level of the crowd and is positioned beneath an *araucária* pine tree (a native species), have more Europeanized features and 'single-plane' faces than most of the others in the scene. Some of those in the main crowd, in fact, are conveniently profiled to display their prognathism and receding foreheads and chins – surely a reference to Petrus Camper's and Julien Joseph Virey's theses about the reclining 'facial angles' of Africans compared to those of Europeans. Indeed, the musician with protruding stomach, just to the right of the bagpipe player, is an exact representation of Virey's 1824 description of the physical characteristics of blacks, offered in a book which later (in English translation) contributed to the resurgence of polygenism in the American South. Virey's blacks, in addition to being characterized, irrespective of habitat, by prognathism, a 'retreating chin', 'lower forehead', and 'teeth set obliquely and projecting', had a stomach organ which was rounder and extended further upwards than in Europeans; furthermore 'almost all' had 'slender calves, knees always half-flexed, a tired demeanour, the body and neck inclined forwards ... [and] protruding

buttocks'.¹⁶ Yet, although Rugendas includes this strange figure, most people in his crowd are not caricatured in this way; witness especially the standing flag-bearer to the left and the King and Queen of Congo, with their elegantly-proportioned bodies, erect postures and much less prognathic profiles. In sum, Rugendas alludes to Virey's theses about African facial angles and bodies, only to subvert them, first as reliable descriptions of most Africans and second as measures of innate, permanent differences between blacks and Europeans.

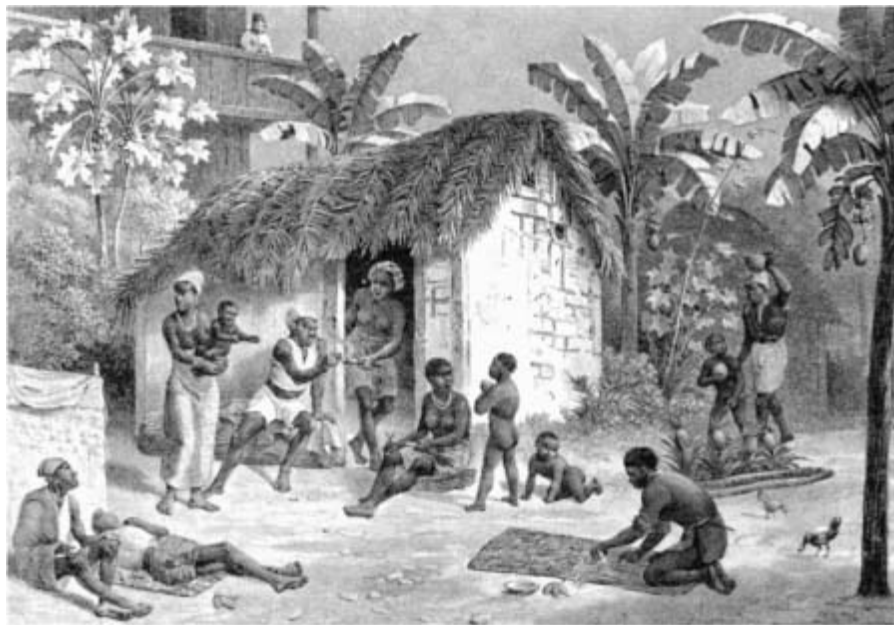


FIGURE 15
DWELLING OF THE BLACKS' (J.M. RUGENDAS)

All of this is consistent with the fact that Rugendas's defence of Africans' moral capacity begins on their home continent. His text qualifies African societies as 'civilized' (albeit less so than European), not 'barbaric' or 'savage' as they were more commonly portrayed.¹⁷ Drawing attention to the existence in Africa of powerful empires, large cities and commerce, it blames the continent's current woes on the disruptive impact of the slave trade. The message is clear: Africans transported to the New World had no inner impediment to achieving 'civilization' anew.¹⁸

The argument is continued in the lithographs. In 'Dwelling of the Blacks', portraying slaves in front of their quarters during their time off, Rugendas asserts Africans' capacity for self-directed labour (Figure 15). There are clear signs here of industriousness, not just leisure: a man plaiting a mat, assisted by a woman preparing palm-leaf fibres for the task; two other men who, although resting, seem to have just finished another mat, stretched on a frame; finally, a water-carrier in the background. Lest there be any doubt about the meaning of

this scene, Rugendas insists that 'everyday experience shows with what indefatigable activity the slaves take advantage of all free moments, indeed even their periods of rest from heavy labours'. The words and the image challenge the presumption of slavery's defenders, that 'blacks' 'only work under compulsion.'¹⁹

'Dwelling of the Blacks' also confounds slave-owners' beliefs that Africans did not have the moral capacity to form strong family ties. To be sure, the several adults and children portrayed in this scene, certainly residents of more than one hut in the slave quarters, are not explicitly organized into family groups. Rugendas's intentions, however, are clear from his composition, which in the context of his contemporaries' disputes over slavery establishes an 'internal narrative' of family formation. Most of the human figures are arranged in a triangle, with the couple that is linked by pipe and firebrand – or, more precisely, the woman who emerges from the hut, in command of the firebrand and the 'hearth' from which it came – positioned prominently at the upper apex. With this central couple thus highlighted, many viewers of the time would have perceived the significance of the representations of certain children. Immediately below the apex of the human triangle, two youngsters direct their gaze at the couple: one (the infant) with arms outstretched towards them, the other (the standing figure) with a posture that suggests quiet admiration.

The 'keepers of the hearth' could be these children's parents; alternatively, in view of the two adult women who seem to mediate their relationship with the youngsters, they could represent the founders of an extended family. Whichever the case, politically aware observers of the time would have recognized that Rugendas was invoking an argument dear to opponents of the slave trade, but inverting the terms in which it was usually presented. Artists and writers more commonly asserted the capacity of Africans to have strong family feelings by showing their anguish upon being separated – thus simultaneously confounding the slavocrats' denial of this capacity and denouncing the consequences of forced labour. This was the strategy pursued by Sophie Doin, in her novel *La Famille Noire* (1825), and before her by English artist George Morland in the painting 'Execrable Human Traffic' (1788, reproduced as a print in Paris in 1794), which was probably one of Doin's points of reference.²⁰ (In both Doin's and Morland's works, an African mother and her child are separated from their respective husband and father.) Rugendas himself may have deliberately played upon his readers' acquaintance with Morland's image in constructing his picture. The firebrand demonstrating the union between the central couple in 'Dwelling of the Blacks' sharply contrasts with the raised stick of the slave trader, which threatens their separation in 'Execrable Human Traffic'. Likewise, the standing child observing this couple in Rugendas's lithograph is portrayed from the same angle as the Africans' son in Morland's picture and has similarly upraised arms; his (or her) erect body, however, expresses serenity, not the

desperation conveyed by the English painter's figure with his forward-leaning posture, backwardly-thrust head and arms raised even higher, as he clings to his mother.

In any event, politically-attuned viewers would have perceived Rugendas's unusual concern to show family creation, not disruption. And they would have understood this reversal, not as a defence of slavery, which the artist condemned explicitly in his text, but as evidence for a prospective case in favour of 'black' moral character in Brazil and elsewhere. Rugendas was keen on showing Africans' success in integrating themselves into Euro-Brazilian civilization, because he knew that this would be powerful proof of their innate ability to do so in other parts of the Americas. A scene showing the destruction of families by Brazilian slavery would not have suited this purpose. Neither would it have contributed to his argument about the acculturative nature of Brazilian institutions, particularly the country's allegedly mild form of forced labour, to which he refers repeatedly: most notably in an illustration highlighting the palm paddler rather than the whip as the typical 'domestic' punishment.²¹



FIGURE 16
'NEW BLACKS' (J.M. RUGENDAS)

The proof of these assertions is that when his theme was the slave trade, Rugendas was quite willing to demonstrate Africans' moral capacity by showing their pain at parting. In 'New Blacks' (Figure 16), picturing recently arrived Africans awaiting sale in a Brazilian slave depot, the two female figures almost certainly would have called to readers' minds standard images about the trade's impact on family ties. To be sure, the bared breasts of the larger woman might, on first sight, have evoked stereotypes about Africans' sensuality, contradictory to bourgeois ideals of family. Rugendas counters this impression, however, by giving this woman a stooped posture – head and shoulders drooping forward, the back curved in such a way as to make the belly prominent and the breasts somewhat receding – which suggests modesty, and at the same time is in keeping with her dejected mien. The result, in this case, is nudity 'naturalized', relieved of sexual connotation. Thus the desolate central figure, her eyelids laden with melancholy, and the smaller woman looking up at her with sad solicitousness would have recalled stories such as those told by Doin and Morland: here again were a mother and her child, torn by sale from their respective husband and father.

Some of Rugendas's more specialized readers, however, would have perceived a deeper meaning in this illustration; for the artist would seem to allude here to the description of a particular case of separation recounted by Luiz Antônio de Oliveira Mendes in an 1812 memorial on the Portuguese slave trade, published by the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon and well-known to students of Brazil.²² Indeed, Rugendas's scene appears to illustrate several points in Mendes's text. The enclosure in which the slaves find themselves could well be the Brazilian depot described by Mendes: 'a large [humid] storeroom ... on the ground floor, which is underneath the master's residence'. Furthermore, the figure at the left, examining his big toe with one hand, while pinching his other thumb and index finger together, as if securing a small object, seems to bring to life Mendes's description of the *bicho do pé*. This scourge of newly-arrived Africans 'was like the smallest flea', and especially proliferated 'in the feet, in the corners and around the edges of the toenails'. Finally, the leaves on the floor – placed by the artist next to the renowned reinvigorant, sugarcane, to indicate their medicinal nature – resemble those of the castor-oil plant or of the 'herb of Saint Caetano', which Mendes says were commonly used by traders to treat the skin ailments of slaves awaiting sale.²³

It is Rugendas's two women, however, who seem to leap from the pages of the Portuguese author's book. Mendes describes a family separation that had occurred in Luanda: 'In one of the lots [of captives] there had been a certain slave woman, with a daughter ... aged seven to eight years, who had lost all taste for food because of the effects of *banzo* [extreme melancholy]'. The cause of the woman's depression was that she believed 'her husband, whom she loved deeply, had given her, with ingratitude, to harsh slavery and, with her, her much-esteemed daughter, as if returning her pledge of marriage'. The woman's 'eyes were two rivers' – the drooping eyelids and downturned mouth

of Rugendas's protagonist fit the description – and she 'continually sat with her head on her knees', as does the seated slave in the lower right corner of our artist's illustration, conceivably portraying the emotion of the scene's central figure at a different moment. The Luanda woman's refusal to eat eventually brought about her death, upon which the European witnesses to the event 'esteemed her child as the daughter of a heroine of love and constancy'.²⁴

Mendes's text, actually written in 1793, ostensibly proposes reforms in the African trade with a view towards making it more lucrative for colonists and king. Yet it is also a defence of the moral character of Africans. Although Mendes's story about the woman begins as if it were an archetypal slavocrat's tale – note the husband/father's apparent perfidy – in fact it subverts planter prejudice by making its protagonist a model of conjugal love, who surrenders herself to death when convinced of her partner's treachery. Furthermore, the story is not extraneous to Mendes's book, but an essential part of the argument. Mendes is careful to give it authority before his readers by attributing it to a slave trader, who could not be suspected of undue 'afrophilia'. In addition, the characteristics of this heroine are those which he recognizes in Africans in general, whom he calls 'faithful, resolute, extremely constant [*constantíssimo*] and susceptible, in the utmost degree, to feelings of love and hate'.²⁵ Mendes here may evoke stereotypes of the passionate nature of peoples of 'hot climes', but he also engages in battle with contemporaries who portrayed non-Europeans as inconstant and therefore fundamentally different from whites in their moral characters.

One suspects, then, that Rugendas was moved to 'illustrate' Mendes's text because the cause it defended resonated with his own and because many of the scientists in his audience, beginning with Humboldt, would have understood the allusion and appreciated its meaning.²⁶ Yet it may have been a peculiar detail in an alternative version of Mendes's text that triggered his decision. I refer to an allegory that is present in a limited 'second printing' of the Portuguese author's essay, which may have reinstated the original manuscript in reaction to earlier censorship.²⁷ The allegory is constructed by giving the African 'heroine' a name that makes her story compellingly memorable. Mendes here adds the crucial information that the child 'was later called Lucretia', and notes that 'this having occurred more than 20 years past, only two years ago there were letters [received attesting] that Lucretia was alive'.²⁸

In so baptizing the daughter, the intent was clearly to honour the character of the 'heroic' mother. Given the context, readers would have perceived the name as an allusion to the chaste Lucretia of Roman legend who, when raped by the Etruscan king's son, Sextus Tarquinius, preferred suicide to dishonour for herself and her beloved husband. This Lucretia's action supposedly provoked the uprising which overthrew the much-hated Tarquin dynasty (which had already 'raped' Rome) and founded the Republic. The story of the African Lucretia does not have these overt political overtones.²⁹ Still, the two women are similar in other ways: in their desire for death after being 'violated'

and above all in the peculiar moral qualities which lead them to 'suicide'. Like the African woman in Mendes's account, the Roman Lucretia also is a heroine; indeed, in the European imagination she is undoubtedly the female personification of love and constancy.³⁰ By associating his African woman with the Lucretia of classical times, Mendes strengthened her claim to be a moral heroine: *constantissima* she indeed was! Above all, he impressed her upon the minds of his readers.

It may have been this which most recommended her story to Rugendas, if indeed the artist had access to the second printing of Mendes's text. The simile would have been especially appealing to Rugendas if it had acquired the resonance that came from common use. That this may well have been the case is suggested by the 1788 poem which inspired Morland's 'Execrable Human Traffic'. In foretelling the rape of the slave woman by European traders after the couple's separation, the poem appears to allude to certain verses of Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*; in both texts, similar metaphors are used in portraying the efforts of the slave couple/Lucrece to move their hard-hearted tormentor(s) to 'soft pity'.³¹

While Rugendas argued that 'blacks' had a work ethic and could feel love and constancy like Europeans, he was concerned above all to demonstrate their ability to understand and accept Christianity. This, as I have argued, is the central theme of the last two lithographs in his volume. Yet, there is a further dimension to the artist's argument about 'spiritual capacity', which can be grasped only by understanding the linked allegorical meanings of the deaths portrayed in the ship's hold and in the Christian burial procession.

In the early nineteenth century, visual artists commonly alluded to their colleagues' works. In 1815, for example, Bavarian draughtsman Peter Cornelius represented the body of one of Goethe's characters, the dying Valentine, mortally wounded by his sister's seducer Faust, in almost exactly the same posture as that of Christ being carried to the tomb in Raphael's *Trasporto al Sepolcro*, a work well known through reproductions and prints.³² Cornelius expected viewers to perceive the reference and understand his gloss: Faust was morally the 'Antichrist'. Rugendas uses exactly the same technique in 'Blacks in the Ship's Hold' (Figure 13). There, the figure of the dead African, carried by sailors, is reminiscent of the body of Christ in representations of the Entombment. More specifically, it is very close to the image on this theme engraved by seventeenth-century artist Matthaeus Merian the elder (Figures 17 and 18). Merian's work would have been familiar to Rugendas's audience. His biblical scenes commonly illustrated contemporary editions of the Scriptures in the Germanic states and France.³³ Goethe mentions frequently browsing through a *Merianbibel*, as such editions of the Bible were called, in his youth; and in a scene in the second part of *Faust* he alludes to one of Merian's engravings, presumably expecting many readers to understand the reference.³⁴



FIGURE 17
 'ENTOMBMENT OF CHRIST' – DETAIL (MATTHAEUS MERIAN)



FIGURE 18
 'BLACKS IN THE SHIP'S HOLD' – DETAIL (J.M. RUGENDAS)



FIGURE 19
'ECCE HOMO' – DETAIL (M. MERIAN)

Rugendas does not 'cite' Merian's Christ as literally as Cornelius does Raphael's; the dead African's head is less thrown back than that of Merian's figure, his right hand is hanging instead of being extended horizontally and his legs are not crossed. Thus the artist can maintain the illusion that this scene was 'drawn from life'. Yet his image is close enough to Merian's to attract the attention of his viewers – or at least of those on the lookout for pictorial allusions – and make them wonder if he might not be glossing Christ's celebrated phrase in the Gospel according to Mark: 'and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave [servant] of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'³⁵ Those who suspected so would have understood that Christ's selfinjunction in this passage was to assume the mantle of the 'Servant of Yahweh', or 'Suffering Servant' of the Book of Isaiah, identified in the Christian tradition (explicitly in Matthew 12:16–18) with the Messiah, because of his expiatory sacrifice and final exaltation.³⁶ Thus, once awakened to the possibility of allegory, these viewers would have begun to notice other telltale signs in the print of the suffering black's subsumption to Christ: the fact that the dead African was portrayed near a 'cross' (formed by the mast and the horizontal edge of the deck, visible through the hatch), and that the standing slave, straining for water, was reminiscent of Christ's stretched (and thirsty) body on the cross.

What would have confirmed the artist's intent, however, are the slaves in the hold that directly evoke images of the 'Suffering Servant', particularly as

He (the *Schmerzensmann*, or ‘Man of Sorrows’) was portrayed in Germanic art. In [Figures 18](#) and [19](#), the two Africans with arms folded at the foot of Rugendas’s mast may be compared with the chastised Christ in Merian’s *Ecce Homo*. The *Schmerzensmann* of the Germanic tradition, when viewed standing or from the waist up, was usually portrayed with sad mien, head inclined to one side, shoulders curved forward and arms crossed in resignation, sometimes at chest level, sometimes lower. Furthermore, He generally wore only a loincloth and was frequently placed next to the cross or in front of the column of Pilate’s palace where he had been whipped, or exposed to the crowd.³⁷ All these characteristics apply to Merian’s *Schmerzensmann* and to Rugendas’s ‘slaves of sorrow’, including the nearby column/mast. In view of the several references to the figure of Christ in this lithograph, one wonders if the head sailor, who illuminates the dead African for the viewer while making an indicative motion with his right hand, is not also saying, with Merian’s Pilate, ‘behold the Man’: or perhaps ‘behold the stages of the cross’, for his gesture, made with index finger extended but hand not closed in a fist, is more inclusive.



[FIGURE 20](#)
‘BURIAL OF ABRAHAM’ (M. MERIAN)

Thus the close identification of the dead ‘black man’ with the body of Christ in the Bahian burial scene had already been made allegorically by Rugendas in his view of the ship’s hold. This is additional confirmation that the two lithographs were meant to be ‘read’ together. A further allusion to Matthaeus Merian in the Bahian picture, however, extends the allegory and defines how

the viewer is to interpret the black 'suffering servants' of both lithographs. Rugendas's burial scene bears a striking resemblance to Merian's portrayal of 'The Burial of Abraham' (compare [Figures 12](#) and [20](#)). In both prints, a funeral cortège, framed by trees on either side, rises into the foreground from a city in a valley behind it. In both, similar temples are featured – exhibiting a pointed tower to the left of a rounded dome – on raised land in the distance, near the centre of the composition. Two robed and hooded figures in Rugendas's scene (perhaps penitents of a religious brotherhood) call to mind the comparably dressed mourners in Merian's procession. The object in the form of an equilateral triangle pointing upwards (perhaps a *matraca*, or noisemaker) that is carried at the head of the Bahian cortège repeats the shape of the lid of the Patriarch's casket, when seen from its end; in the Christian tradition, such a triangle is one of the symbols of Abraham.³⁸

Abraham's cortège is directed towards the two caves on the right. The black man's procession is also directed to the right – to a church or churchyard, somewhere 'off stage'. The artist, however, hints to viewers who do not know what is ethnographically correct in Bahia that the cortège will turn and move through the gate, which occupies the same position in the composition as Merian's double cave. The Christ on the crucifix is properly positioned to 'bless' the procession's passage through this entrance, which is decorated with vases reminiscent of funeral urns, as befits the gateway to a cemetery, and is invitingly open. To be sure, the area behind the gate, full of trees and brush, does not have the obvious appearance of a burial ground. Precisely because of this, however, it would recall to the observer of the picture, just as would the exuberant vegetation above the caves in Merian's engraving, the biblical description (Genesis 23: 17–18, 20) of the untamed land ceded to Abraham by the Canaanites for the interment of his family and descendants.

In the Christian tradition, Abraham and Christ are closely associated. Both are symbols of redemption through suffering and servitude. Both are the founders of a chosen people. Indeed, Christ is the 'new Abraham'. In New Testament times it is to the 'Children of Christ' that God's promise to Abraham applies: 'You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations.... And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan.'³⁹ Rugendas's allegory, subsuming Africans and their offspring to Christ and Abraham, is now clear. 'Blacks', once Christianized, would eventually inherit that new Canaan, Brazil. There, they would come to form one of God's chosen peoples, fully equal to those of Europe. For if the African, buried in Christ, was a 'new Abraham', then, like the Patriarch himself and (presumably) the European, he was a descendant of Noah's first son, Shem, the embodiment of the higher attributes of human nature. He could not be, as Virey and many other thinkers of the time argued, the descendant of Noah's accursed child, Ham, and thus condemned to a life of service to whites.⁴⁰ The question posed at the beginning of this essay has been answered. Rugendas places the 'Burial of a Black Man in Bahia' at the end of

his book because he conceives of the Christianized 'black' as the positive prototype of the future Brazilian nation.

The argument is remarkable, compared to some rival formulations of the 1820s, such as Virey's, which foreshadow the subsequent resurgence of polygenism or the rise of scientific racism. Yet it is not unique to its time; nor is it unproblematic. Rugendas's position on Africans and slavery seems to have been close to that of the Société de la Morale Chrétienne, a champion of social reform and the leading French abolitionist movement of the 1820s. The Société's members 'constituted a veritable Who's Who of the leaders of the liberal opposition [to the Restoration] in the 1820s'.⁴¹ Yet their professed goals were socially conservative: 'to come to the aid of the unfortunate, to spread in the lower classes of society practical knowledge that will help them in the conduct of their lives ... [to] support the established institutions in the great tasks of suppressing crime and vice.'⁴² While the Société preached the unity of mankind in Christ, it also advocated class harmony. Koster's idea that Brazil's peculiar institutions 'brought [master and slave] closer together' may have been accepted by Rugendas, in the first instance, to promote the defence of African moral character; however, I suspect it was not incompatible with the artist's vision of the ideal relationship between social superiors and inferiors. Suggestive, in this respect, is the subsequent career of Rugendas's collaborator on the text to *Artistic Travels*; Victor Aimé Huber later became a leading ideologue of German 'Christian social conservatism', which urged the state to take an active role in promoting the welfare of the poor, for humanitarian and religious reasons, but also to avoid class struggle.⁴³

At the same time, Rugendas's visual allegory, approximating the slave to Christ and Abraham, can probably be situated within the 'Christian renewal' in French culture and art of this period. It seems to echo the insistence by the priest Lamennais (in 1817) that Christ 'came not to be served but to serve', that He was particularly concerned about those who suffered, and that people should imitate Him, for the good of humanity, through their own redemptive sacrifice.⁴⁴ One of Lamennais's friends in the 1830s was Ary Scheffer, a leader of the renewal of French religious art, whose painting 'Christ the Consoler' (1837) showed Jesus succouring the 'broken-hearted' and slaves of various origins, including an African.⁴⁵ These connections are intriguing, for Rugendas's biographer, Gertrud Richert, states that he associated with Scheffer in Paris during the 1820s.⁴⁶

The image of Christ as one whose trials made him identify with the suffering could and did evolve in some circles into the concept of Christ the social revolutionary.⁴⁷ For Rugendas, however, and for most of his elite readers, I suspect that the fusion of the African with Jesus, the new Abraham, was part of a conservative vision of tutelary reform, similar to that which guided the Société de la Morale Chrétienne. Worse, it may have eased many consciences; for it could easily have conveyed the message that the trials of the African Christ/Abraham, like those of the Man of Sorrows and the Patriarch

themselves, were ultimately ordained by God, and thus represented a necessary expiation before 'blacks' could inherit their promised land.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

1. French edition: *Voyage Pittoresque dans le Brésil*; both editions published by Engelmann & Cie, Paris/Mulhausen. I cite hereafter a facsimile of the German edition of 1835 and crossreference the Portuguese translation: respectively, [J.]M. Rugendas, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien* (Stuttgart: Deo-Verlag Bläse, 1986); and J.M. Rugendas, *Viagem Pitoresca através do Brasil* (Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia/EDUSP, 1989). The present essay partially summarizes and extends the argument in R.W. Slenes, 'As Provações de um Abraão africano: a nascente nação brasileira na *Viagem alegórica* de Johann Moritz Rugendas', *Revista de História da Arte e Arqueologia*, 2 (IFCH/Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 1995–6), pp. 272–94, with English translation, pp. 519–36.
2. Reis, *A Morte é uma Festa: Ritos Fúnebres e Revolta Popular no Brasil do Século XIX* (São Paulo: Cia. das Letras, 1991), pp. 140–1, 174–6, 197–8.
3. Rugendas knew the name of this church, identifying it in the legend of another lithograph (Part 3, plate 26).
4. Komissarov, 'A Expedição do Acadêmico G. I. Langsdorff e seus Artistas ao Brasil', in Salvador Monteiro and Leonel Kaz (eds), *Expedição Langsdorff ao Brasil, 1821–1829*, 3 vols (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Alumbamento/Livroarte Editora, 1988), Vol.I, pp. 11–36; N. Carneiro, *Rugendas no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Cosmos Editora, 1979), pp. 5–26.
5. Carneiro, *Rugendas no Brasil*, p.30.
6. In the case of the four illustrations on 'blacks' for which the final originals are extant (Ibid., pp. 83, 87, 89, 111), the lithograph is faithful to its model – as it is when translating the land-and cityscapes, albeit not the portrayals of Indians (Ibid., pp. 36–37, 44).
7. On this collaboration, see Slenes, 'As Provações', pp. 275–80.
8. H. Koster, *Travels in Brazil*, 2 vols (London: Longman [et al.], 1817 [1st edn 1816]), Vol.II, pp. 241–2; Rugendas, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien*, Part 2, plate 18, and Part 4, plate 17.
9. Koster, *Travels*, Vol.II, Ch.13 and pp. 241, 258–9; Rugendas, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien*, Part 4, plate 19; and Part 2, pp. 31–2, Part 4, pp. 18, 28 (*Viagem*, pp. 82–3, 150–1, 159–60).
10. Rugendas, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien*, Part 4, p. 28 (*Viagem*, pp. 159–60).
11. G. Freyre, *Casa Grande e Senzala*, 20th edn (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio Ed., 1980), pp. 355–6 (notes 176–81).
12. This was a key debate of the period: A. Boime, *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), p.xiv.
13. Rugendas, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien*, Part 2, pp. 23–4 (*Viagem*, pp. 76–7).
14. P. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780–1850* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), Vol.I, p.236.
15. Rugendas, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien*, Part 4, p. 22 (*Viagem*, pp. 154).
16. J.J. Virey, *Histoire naturelle du genre humain*, 2nd edn, revised and expanded, 2 vols (Paris: Crochard, 1824), Vol.II, p.3.
17. Cf. an influential work which practically reserved 'civilized' for European societies: K. Malte Brun, *Universal Geography or a Description of All the Parts of the World, on a New Plan ...*, 7 vols. (Boston,

- MA: Wells and Lilly, 1826), Vol.I, pp. 599–600, first published in French.
18. Rugendas, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien*, Part 2, pp. 13–16 (*Viagem*, pp. 67–9).
19. Rugendas, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien*, Part 2, p.27 (*Viagem*, p.79).
20. S. Doin, *La famille noire, ou La traite et l'esclavage* (Paris: Henry Servier, Libraire, 1825), pp. 93–107. For a reproduction of Morland's painting and for its influence in France see: Boime, *Art of Exclusion*, pp. 60–2; and H. Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, Vol. IV: *From the American Revolution to World War 1*, Part 1: *Slaves and Liberators*, Vol. IV/1 of L. Bugner (general ed.), *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, 4 vols, in 6 tomes (Houston, TX/Cambridge, MA: Menil Foundation/Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 125–7.
21. Rugendas, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien*, Part 4, plate 10.
22. L.A. de Oliveira Mendes, 'Discurso Académico ao Programa. Determinar com todos os seus sintomas as doenças agudas, e crônicas, que mais frequentemente acometem os pretos recém-tirados da África: examinando as causas ...', in *Memórias Econômicas da Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa*, Vol.IV (Lisbon: Tipografia da Academia, 1812), pp. 1–63. I cite hereafter from a more accessible modern edition: L.A. de Oliveira Mendes, *Memória a respeito dos escravos e tráfico da escravidão entre a costa d'África e o Brasil, apresentada à Real Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*, 1793 [*sic*: the text is the published version of 1812], ed. by J. Capela (Porto: Publicações Escorpão, 1977).
23. Mendes, *Memória*, pp.51, 63, 80.
24. *Ibid.*, p.62.
25. *Ibid.*, p.61.
26. For Humboldt's repudiation of slavery, see: A. von Humboldt, *Ensayo político sobre la isla de Cuba* (Havana: Archivo Nacional de Cuba, 1960), Ch.7.
27. Identical to the 1812 edition in its frontispiece and table of contents, this 'second printing' of the volume of *Memórias Econômicas* contains a longer version of Mendes's text (pp. 1–82), which is more openly critical of slavery and the slave trade. Of the six copies of this work known to me, all nominally from 1812, only one – in the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon, the book's publisher – is a 'second printing'. A modern reprint of this alternative version is: L.A. de Oliveira Mendes, 'Discurso ...', in A. Carreira, *As Companhias Pombalinas de Grão Pará e Maranhão e Pernambuco e Paraíba*, 2nd edn (Lisbon, Editora Presença, 1983 [1st edn 1969]), Appendix, pp. 364–420. To my knowledge, none of the modern editors or students of Mendes's text has noted the existence of two versions. The Royal Academy does not have the 1793 manuscript.
28. Mendes, 'Discurso' (alternative version), in Carreira, *As Companhias Pombalinas*, p. 393–4.
29. Then again, perhaps it does, for if the 'alternative version' of Mendes's memorial was the same text written in 1793, the 'letters [of two years earlier] that Lucretia was alive' would have been written in 1791–the same year as the slave revolution in Saint Domingue.
30. For changing interpretations of Lucretia's story, see I. Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: a Myth and its Transformations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).
31. The poem is in Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, Vol.IV/1, p.70; the relevant lines of the *Rape of Lucrece* are nos. 586–95.
32. M. Sonnabend, *Peter Cornelius: Zeichnungen zu Goethes Faust*, exhibition catalogue, städtischen Galerie im Stadel, Frankfurt am Main (Mainz: Universitätsdruckerei und Verlag H. Schmidt, 1991), pp.38–9.
33. Matthaeus Merian's 'Icones Biblicae' (1625–30) appeared in Lutheran Bibles of 1630 and 1704, the Mainz Catholic Bible of 1740, and numerous subsequent editions. See: L.H. Wüthrich, *Das druckgraphische Werk von Matthaeus Merian D. Ae.*, 3 vols, Vol.III (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1993), pp.7–28; H. Fuchs, *Bibelillustrationen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, published doctoral thesis, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität (Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1986), pp. 73–5.
34. Wüthrich, *Das druckgraphische Werk*, Vol.III, p.57.
35. Gospel According to Mark, 10: 44–5, *Holy Bible*, New Revised Standard Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), New Testament, p.47.
36. Isaiah, 52:13–53:11, *Holy Bible*, Old Testament, pp.683–4.
37. See the standing and seated *Schmerzensämmen* (compare the latter to the seated slave in the foreground of the detail from Rugendas) in J.E. von Borries, *Albrecht Dürer: Christus als Schmerzensmann* (Karlsruhe: Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, 1972), pp.4, 11, 14 19; W. Mersman, *Der Schmerzensmann* (Düsseldorf: Verlag L. Schwann, 1952), plates 1 and 58; H. Möbius, *Passion und Auferstehung in Kultur und Kunst des Mittelalters* (Vienna: Edition Tusch, 1978), fig. 58; W.L. Straus (ed.), *The Complete Engravings, Etchings and Drypoints of Albrecht Dürer* (New York: Dover

Publications, 1972), plate 52.

38. Reis, *A Morte é uma Festa*, p.141 (for ethnographic details); George Fergusson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.92.
39. Genesis, 17: 4, 8, *Holy Bible*, Old Testament, pp.12 and 13.
40. G.A. Gaskell, *Dictionary of all Scriptures and Myths* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1981), pp. 136, 336 and 538; Virey, *Histoire*, Vol.II, p.82; D.B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp.539–41.
41. L.C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: the Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802–1848* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.10.
42. W.B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530–1880* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980), p.203, citing one of the Société's leaders.
43. T. Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck, 1800–1866* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp.214, 336–7, 389.
44. F.P.B. Bowman, *Le Christ des barricades, 1789–1848* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1987), p.56.
45. Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, Vol.IV/I, pp. 184–5.
46. G. Richert, *Johann Moritz Rugendas, ein deutscher Maler des XIX. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Rembrandt-Verlag, 1959), p.16.
47. Bowman, *Le Christ des barricades*, Chs.6–8.

Brazilian Slaves Represented in their Own Words

ROBERT KRUEGER

I

Ongoing research has assembled the first collection of Brazilian slave narratives and texts. This study examines the nature of this primary corpus of Brazilian slave texts, focuses on selections of Brazilian slave writings and oral accounts and evaluates their relation to slavery, abolition and criticism.

The Brazilian slavocracy fell comparatively late – one year before the monarchy fell to a military coup in 1889. It had been the largest transatlantic chattel slave system. This phenomenon is the domain of grand international historiography, in which a good number of observers have rendered rich pictorial and documentary representations of the bodies of Brazilian slaves. This present study focuses on what the slaves themselves said and wrote about themselves. This corpus of Brazilian slave texts provides a unique auto-representative view of slave bodies, and provides the qualitative sensibility of how and what the slaves felt and thought about their bodies-in their own words.

There is overwhelmingly more literature about slaves by non-slaves than by slaves themselves. Examination of the Brazilian literary canon shows that abolitionist literature directly informed by slaves or ex-slaves is extremely rare, with Luis Gama being a special case. This calls for a search for Brazilian slave texts themselves in order even to address the literary canon.

II

The Body of Brazilian Slave Texts

The creation of a corpus of Brazilian slave texts is our essential research activity. Recent research in Portuguese archives presents analytical challenges with such texts as the testimonies of Brazilian slaves, both African and *crioulo*, brought before the Holy Inquisition on charges of superstition and bigamy.

Nothing compares to the power and meaning of these slaves' testimonies. Self-portrayal is a core issue of slavery and abolition: the slave's own expression must figure in the study of slavery and its literature. Self-expression, self-imaging, self-representation, self-identification, self-reflection

and self-liberation. Here we might study how the documentary, along with the visual, artistic cultural self-descriptions of Brazilian slaves reflect a unique perspective.

Robert Conrad’s *Children of God’s Fire*¹ includes several texts written or dictated by Brazilian slaves and ex-slaves. A previous anthology had initiated the collecting of African-Brazilian slave texts with a few items.²

The North American slave narrative was a unique type of literature, one that eventually has been theorized and incorporated as a genre.³ North American slaves and ex-slaves had produced a large and rich body of literature by the time of abolition. By the end of a large 1940s project that collected ex-slave interviews and narratives in the United States, there were about six thousand accounts.⁴ The literary equivalent was sought in Brazil, because the Luso-Brazilian empire enslaved more black Africans for a longer time than other Western nations, with many consequences today. No collection of slave texts was found for the largest slavocracy. A few individual texts were assembled from anthologies, and the search criteria broadened to include any kind of text, not only narratives, written or dictated by Brazilian slaves and ex-slaves. Many separately edited texts were obtained from Brazilian and Brazilianist historians and their publications, as well as from archives, unpublished texts and private holders.

TABLE 1

FACTS BEARING UPON PRODUCTION OF BRAZILIAN SLAVE TEXTS	
Years since Brazilian abolition (1888–2001)	112
Years of Luso-Brazilian slavery (Brazil 1500/Portugal 1441)	384
Brazilian slaves ^a	3.5 million
Brazilian slave/ex-slave ‘authors’	140
Number of Brazilian ‘slave texts’	170
Number of estimated pages	700
Slavery of slave population 1872 ^b	10%
Slave narratives ^c	600
Most estimates for the total number of slaves in Brazil fall between the 3.5 million figure by A. Meyers, in K.A. Apiah and H.L. Gates, Jr. (eds), <i>Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience</i> (New York: Civitas, 1999), p.302., and the six million figure for 1851 by H. Thomas, <i>The Slave Trade</i> (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), p.745. Often the researcher must estimate between numbers of slaves transported from Africa and the total slave population in Brazil. Thomas settles on four million (pp.804–5).	
E.R.Conrad, <i>The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery</i> (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972), p. 297.	
W. Andrews, ‘Brazil’, in <i>Oxford Companion to African American Literature</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.668.	

We find only one extensive Brazilian ‘slave narrative’, along with a few other autobiographic sketches. To date, for 400 years of slavery, the collection consists of over 170 texts, comprising approximately 700 pages, produced by more than 140 slave or ex-slave authors.

Table 1 shows just how rare a Brazilian slave text is. A preliminary explanation as to why there are so comparatively few Brazilian slave narratives or texts must at the very least take into account such factors as the

mediating activities of slave-owning society. Consider for example, the comparison between free autographic or co-scriptive text producers (Santa Rosa, Baquaqua, Gama, Mariano Perreira dos Santos) and the tortured nature of court-transcribed testimony extracted from slaves accused of mutiny, murder or heresies, where they enjoyed no human legal status above a *máquina*, a *peça* (piece) or an *animal*. Nevertheless, the corpus as a whole speaks as with one voice.

TABLE 3
COMPARATIVE MODES OF BRAZILIAN SLAVE TEXT PRODUCTION:
(number of texts/number of pages or simply number of pages)

Autographic	
Autographic total testimony	
Santa Rosa letters (150)	(220+)
S. Rosa letters and texts (50)	(200)
Baquaqua letters (68)	(104)
Ac. F. B. deplecten (2)	
Gama letters (21)	
Baquaqua 6 letters (English) (6/8)	
Manuscript total	(43) (136)

Table 3 demonstrates some of the complex issues facing the theorization of the corpus of Brazilian slave texts. By observing such factors as the recording modes and agencies that created the texts, we classify the texts as auto-scriptive, co-scriptive or transcriptive, and account for the degree of self-expression in each text. These form a spectrum ranging from voluntary expression, as in the case of the abolitionist ex-slave author Luis Gama, to involuntary or totally coerced expression, as in the case of extraction by torture of testimony from slaves in criminal or Inquisitional proceedings. Also, theory must reflect on the impact on the corpus of such factors as the deliberate destruction of slave expression, as in the burning of one thousand *folhas* of ‘Santa’ Rosa’s writings.⁵

The slave texts are arranged thematically and only partially chronologically, starting with the recent interviews of the last living exslaves, and then moving on to the voluminous writings of Santa Rosa Egipcíaca, a venereal slave turned baroque mystic and Brazil’s first Black woman writer. Next are the chronologically arranged texts produced by various slave rebellions throughout Brazilian history, followed by the texts of individual slaves. After these, Brazil’s only extensive slave narrative is discussed, and finally the writings of a revolutionary abolitionist republican ex-slave.

III

Brazilian Slaves in their Own Words

In 1982, an extraordinary accident of human longevity gave us one of the last living voices of Brazilian slavery when the 122-year-old Mariano Pereira dos Santos, an ex-slave from northern Paraná, narrated his recollections of slave

life and the first years of freedom: 'It's like I've been saying; now [1982], after the liberation [1888], we're in glory.'⁶ Mariano ironically puts the interviewer in the overseer's position when he describes the pursuit of a runaway slave:

It's the same thing as you, Sir, going into the forest on a hunt. You, Sir, put the dogs on the trail of some game. And you, Sir, just wait, watching. The dog trails here and there, here and there. Until he finds the prey and brings it back to you, Sir. Dead or alive. He brings it to where you are and you, Sir, take your rifle, or revolver, you shot him. You leave him right there.

It's the same as today when somebody goes out, gets into a fight, shots a gun, and a person falls down dead.

Mariano interruptedly narrates one of his most painful memories when he describes how the sadistic overseers and their armed enforcers *faziam um baile* (got up a dance):

It didn't matter whether it was a young girl, or a married woman, or anybody's woman. They did whatever they wanted. They ordered a man to take off his clothes or off a girl, or off one of the women. And they made them dance naked there. And, so, it's what I'm telling you. And you had to stay there, in the cold! And today when I say it I don't even want to remember.

Mariano's many narrative devices give a folkloric character to his oral text. Many of his motifs are symbols of the suffering under slavery: 'We had to eat out of troughs; with wooden spoons. And rationed even! It wasn't food, like now. We worked to eat.... We suffered hunger in the slave times, and after slavery, too. Because after liberation we went out without anything.' Mariano is surprised by the interviewer's question as to a slave killing the boss: 'What? No one ever killed one, no! The overseer would order the slaves killed. Aren't I telling you that they did whatever they wanted? We never had a voice. If they ordered anyone killed, it was done. There was no crime in it. No jail. They were the government.' Mariano reluctantly recalls the treatment of slave children:

They would bring children to raise. They bought them in exchange for almost anything, for nothing. They brought them to be raised under their rule. They were raised until they could work; the parents didn't control anything they had.... They brought them after weaning, to raise them under their regime, their crime.

Throughout Mariano's interview, there is one motif that imprints every step of his narrative – his *pé* (foot). With abolition, Mariano won mobility. Transforming himself from a field slave into a freedman teamster, he became a pioneer pedestrian who left telluric footprints on the São Paulo topography.

Before liberation, he had run constantly to please the master's desires – 'We even had to eat on foot'. Once free, his perseverance is expressed in the phrase *o pezinho no chão* (my foot on the ground). And if a slave ever dared to run away, 'they'd come after him, and with a very sharp knife they'd puncture the soles of his feet. He ended up like the barefoot person who steps on thorns, wherever he goes the thorns hurt. So he'd have to walk with his feet skating.' During slavery, the Brazilian slaves were prohibited from wearing footwear. Mariano counters with his foot firmly planted on free ground. In his final days in the hospital, Mariano still equivocates about his final acceptance of shoes: Only now [1982] in the hospital have I put on shoes, like folks used to. Now they're teaching the children to wear shoes. I'm from the old days and I never went in shoes. My feet on the ground, even with frost.'

The first prolific slave author is also Brazil's first black woman writer. Brazilian historians recently found the trial papers of the Portuguese Inquisition case number 9065, which contain autobiographical and biographical documents for Rosa Egipcíaca, who had provided volumes of information to her interrogators from 1763 to 1765. Mott's resulting biography of her, also containing copious quotes from her writings, teachings and testimony, is the principal source of our information.⁷ We have extant 26 of Rosa's letters and 350 pages of her dictation.⁸

Rosa's odyssey is an emblem of eighteenth-century Brazilian slavocracy and its ideology. At the age of six, in 1725, a Korana native of the Mina coast of West Africa, Rosa was captured, enslaved, and loaded on a *tumbeiro* slave ship. She was landed at Candilária, Rio de Janeiro, and sold. During the first eight years of her ordeal, her owner raped her and continued to *desonestá-la e tratar torpemente com ela* (dishonour her and treat her shamefully).⁹

At 14 years of age, Rosa was sold as a venereal slave to an aristocrat in gold-rush Minas Gerais. Considering the severe shortage of women of all races in the area, the opportunity for high profits in the venereal business forced many slave prostitutes to perform an extraordinary number of sex acts. Rosa was eventually attacked by a strange disease which left her with a swollen face, a tumour in her abdomen and frequent faintings, which become characteristic of her future raptures and demonic possessions. At 30, Rosa sold her worldly possessions and transformed herself from a prostitute slave into a *beata* (pious church woman). As an *escrava de ganho* (street vendor) she wandered the streets of the region's towns, attending mass and ceremonies in the newly built Baroque churches, where she learned the rudiments of the ornate Catholic liturgy and ritual. Rosa, hearing voices and routinely possessed by demons in trances, mastered the ritual of exorcism under the tutelage of a famous exorcist, her new owner. Thus, she converted the painful symptoms of her venereal condition into a possession by 'seven demons ... feeling as if a cauldron of boiling water had spilled onto her body, and thus fell unconscious to the ground, splitting her head on the stone under St. Benedito's altar'.¹⁰ Rosa began a religious career that would take her to the highest levels and

contradictions of the Luso-Brazilian empire.

Rosa's religious experience graduated from voices to possessions and visions. At times, during her many trances, she would break out in *sermões edificantes* (edifying sermons). She was positively dogmatic; not only did she have the audacity to preach in the religion of the slave masters, but also presumed that 'everyone maintained perfect composure in the churches'. She designated herself the custodian of those marvellous Baroque temples, her liberated zone. She used physical force to remove the irreverent from the church, even slave-owners. Tropical Baroque religious iconography, with its polychromatic paintings and sculptures, provided inspiration and passion for Rosa's literacy and multimedia visions.¹¹

At the beginning of her career as *beata*, the severe dichotomy of slavery, the struggle of opposites, enslavement and freedom, marked her already famous ecstasies, one moment possessed by Satan and in the next 'celestial visions ... of St Mary and hearing choruses of angels'.¹² Finally, one day in the cathedral, when she had stolen the show from a distinguished preacher, the bishop ordered her publicly whipped, leaving her permanently partially paralysed on her right side. Afterwards, she was declared a fraud and a *fechiceira* (witch) and suffered severe persecution by churchmen and laymen alike.

Rosa fled with her exorcist mentor to Rio de Janeiro in 1751. The fact of her *alfabetização* (literate education) is of historical importance; she incorporates her need for this elite power in her visions. One day in a rapture, she receives a Trinitarian injunction:

Sweeping St John the Baptist church, she saw a white dove in the centre of the cross, a beautiful one, with red feet, claws and beak so shiny that they looked like hot iron, and the dove told her the following words: 'You will learn to read and to write, because I want to build a nest in your breast'.¹³

Her identity with St Anne, the mother who teaches her daughter St Mary to read, the Mother of God the Son, would remain central to her character her entire life. She studied assiduously, the first known African Brazilian slave woman to learn to read and to write, and for the rest of her life *vive escrevendo* (she lives writing).¹⁴ Rosa was one of 28 literate women in Rio de Janeiro at the time.¹⁵ She became known as *a Flor do Rio de Janeiro* (the Flower of Rio de Janeiro), a living saint. She financed and directed the building of her convent, the Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora do Parto. With some dozens of 'young girls and former women of the night ... negresses ... *mulatas*', she became the pious 'Madre Rosa' with a multitude of devotees, including ex-owners. In her visionary world she is the *ama-de-leite* (wet nurse) to the Christ Child who combs her hair after each repast.¹⁶

At one point, Rosa's unorthodoxy moved the church authorities to expel her from her beloved Recolhimento. She was imprisoned by the bishop, investigated and sent to Lisbon, Portugal, to face the Holy Office of the Inquisition, accused of idolatry and heresy in 1763. In the last session, Rosa

relates to the Holy Officers one of her most paradisiacal visions in which a voice tells her: 'You will be the queen bee reigning in the hive of love. You will fabricate the sweet royal jelly to set upon the table of the celestial banquets, for the sustenance and nourishment of your invited friends.'¹⁷ Fearing Inquisitional implications, her hitherto faithful Franciscan confessor and benefactor in Rio de Janeiro burned one thousand sheets of her writings and sayings, thus, depriving posterity of the full record of Rosa's thoughts and feelings.¹⁸

Rosa's works and writings are a unique manifestation of Luso-Brazilian *cultismo* and even *conceptismo*. Rosa is a human being obliquely inserted in history, a living incongruity in the nexus of slavocracy. Her religious enthrallment negates her venereal enslavement. She incorporates many intense extremes, so typical of the *engenho* (sugar mill) of *cultismo barroco*. Her religious resistance was a courageous, creative, and singularly relevant response to the horrors of slavery in Brazil. She was prophetic and revolutionary in her feminism and anti-racism.

Letters written by Brazilian slaves are very rare. In colonial Brazil, women were represented before the authorities by some masculine mediation. Hence the letter that Esperança Garcia wrote in 1770 is audacious in that she addresses herself directly to the governor of the captaincy of Piauí, complaining of mistreatment by unjust administrators of the ranch. In her own hand she pressed her arguments, beginning with: 'I am a slave, a married woman, under your jurisdiction'. Then Esperança proceeds to complain that a certain Captain Couto

removed me from the ranch where I lived with my husband, to be the cook at his [Couto's] house, where I am treated very badly ... there are great thunders of beatings ... I am a cushion of bruises. There are great thunders of beatings on one of my sons, only a child whom he [Couto] made bleed from the mouth.

Then she boldly states that 'by the love of God, I escaped'. She then extends her moral argument and urges the governor to give her and others some justice: in 'three [miserable] years' she and her 'fellow victims need to go to confession ... there is a child of mine and two others who need to be baptized'. She closes the petition by imploring 'Your Worthiness' to order her return to her original ranch so that she may 'live with her husband and baptize her daughter.' And she signs it: 'Your slave, Esperança Garcia'.¹⁹ Clearly, Esperança crafted a well composed letter, arguing on moral, civil and humanitarian grounds, at a time when it was illegal for a slave to run away, let alone appeal to slavocratic authority – which did not, apparently, deliver justice in this case.

There are very few autograph documents by slaves involved in revolt or rebellion. One such text is a slave treaty in 1789 Ilheus, Bahia, which sues, on behalf of dozens of rebels, for peace from their former owner for a return to

work: 'Senhor, we want peace, not war; if you Sir also want us in peace it must be under these conditions'.²⁰ A literate conspirator drafted their demands while their *quilombo* (escaped slave community) was under heavy blockade, forcing the self-liberated to prefer re-enslavement back on the *fazenda* (ranch). Their conditions for returning to work included reforms in all aspects of plantation life. It is clear that in the past they had been severely overworked, without respite. First of all, they demanded that 'each week you are to give us Friday and Saturday to work for ourselves, not discounting one of these days for holy days'. They demanded 'nets and canoes' for their own fishing and 'a large boat for when we go to Bahia we may put our cargoes so we don't have to pay the freight ... The sailors are to receive ... all the necessary clothing.' They demanded reductions in workload:

In the manioc fields, we men want the quota of only two and a half hands and two hands for the women.... The cane quota must be five hands, and not six canes in each shock ... at the cane-rolling mill there must be four women cane feeders, and two crane pulleys.... At each caldron there must be a fire tender and one for each group of kettles, and on Saturdays there must be work stoppage without fail at the sugar mill.

They further demanded that 'We be able to plant our rice wherever we want, in any marsh, without our having to ask permission, and we each can cut jacaranda or other wood without having to give notice'. And they further require the end to distasteful work locations and even plantation land management. They make two final demands that are more revolutionary than the previous ones:

Being in accordance with all the above articles, and conceding that we always remain in possession of the [plantation's] hardware, we are ready to work as before, because we do not want to follow the bad customs of the other plantations. We shall be able to enjoy ourselves, relax, and sing whenever we wish without your interference nor will permission be necessary.

Their demands were too anachronistic; their former owner tricked them into a parley and recaptured them. Their *tratado* (treaty) became part of the evidence of the subsequent criminal trial.

Brazilian slave autobiography is very rare. Some last wills and testaments of ex-slaves contain autobiographical sketches dictated in the face of mortality. Only a few individuals provide us with extensive autobiographical information. The only complete slave narrative by a Brazilian slave is that of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, who dictated his memoirs in 1854, in English, in Detroit to a US abolitionist, years after escaping in New York harbour.²¹ Hence, Baquaqua's text is actually part of the US genre. He describes his sale and mistreatment in West Africa, the miserable Middle Passage, brutal

sufferings under various masters in Brazil and his torturous escape and problems in North America.

We were chained together, and tied with ropes round our necks, and were thus drawn to the sea shore. The ship was lying some distance off. I had never seen a ship before, and my idea of it was, that it was some object of worship of the white man. I imagined that we were all to be slaughtered, and were being led there for that purpose.

Baquaqua finds his Brazilian masters impossible to satisfy:

I [tried] to raise myself in his [my Brazilian owner's] opinion, by being very attentive and obedient; but it was all the same, do what I would, I found I had a tyrant to serve, nothing seemed to satisfy him, so I took to drinking likewise, then we were all of a sort, bad master, bad slave.

Besides providing his abolitionist interlocutor with valuable ethnographic information on Africa, Baquaqua also struggles to take control of the narrative, which he does in the middle of the dictation. He relates:

I was soon placed at hard labour, such as none but slaves and horses are put to.... I was compelled to carry them [stones] that were so heavy it took three men to raise them to my head ... I was then sent out to sell bread for my master ... the lash was my portion.... I at last made up my mind to drown myself; I would rather die than live to be a slave. I then ran down to the river and threw myself in, but being seen by some persons who were in a boat, I was rescued from drowning.

Baquaqua was then sold to a sea trader captain in the south – ‘The present and future were as one, no dividing mark, all Toil! Toil! Cruelty!’ Cruelty!, On a trip north with a load of coffee, Baquaqua escaped ship in New York harbour. After several years of schooling, and suffering racism in the United States, Baquaqua narrates his memoirs and writes letters to missionary friends trying to return home:

I have consulted some of my friends and no objections have been made yet to my going to Africa.... I think I shall not remain in the United States long, unless the prospect opens for me to return to my native land ... but if not I think I shall go to Canada, and then fear I shall give up going entirely.... This lady they speak of, she is very good friends to the coloured people. I got acquainted with her about three years ago. She was very good friend to me. About four months ago they began to talk about her and I ... I [have learned] to be very careful I don't go out much. I Study my books, this all ... I feel I may do more good in Africa than I can here.²²

The most prodigious and powerful Brazilian slave writer and intellectual

was Luis Gama (1830–82), self-liberated ex-slave, an extraordinary abolitionist, republican, journalist, poet, lawyer, orator and liberator. Gama rarely referred to his past as a child or as a slave. He wrote only one autobiographic sketch in 1880, two years before he died.²³ He was born in 1830 in Bahia and raised by rebel parents. He spent his first years with his famous revolutionary mother Luiza Mahim, who was also a co-conspirator with her former owner, Gama's father, in the 1837 'Sabinada' revolution. Gama says that his father was a Portuguese Bahian aristocrat who, though an affectionate father, was a self-impooverished decadent who sold his ten-year old son Luis into slavery in 1840. He ended up serving as a domestic slave in São Paulo. In 1847, with the help of a white university student boarding in the household, he learned his first letters. In 1848 he legally freed himself as a result of his investigating laws that proved his illegal enslavement.

Gama joined a military police unit, as secretary. In his conselheiro's library, he read literary and legal tomes.²⁴ He had an autodidactic relationship to the canon. In 1854 he was discharged for insubordination for threatening an insolent officer. After two years as a part-time *escrivão* (notary), he became secretary at the *Secretaria de Polícia* of São Paulo.

Gama used what he learned in his boss's library and the police headquarters in his war against the slavocracy. He became a pioneer abolitionist, but in that role he tended to be more the liberator or emancipator. In 1859, within 12 years of first learning letters, he published his first volume of poems, *Primeiras Trovas Burlescas*, which was a sensation. His satire made daring attacks on social and racial mores and on real social persons and types from all classes. His meanest lampoons were hurled at the pretentious upper and middle classes, focusing invective and irony on the fashionable denial of African ancestry and the hypocritical whitening involved in the slavocratic hierarchy. He also provided Brazil's first authentic expressions of *négritude*, in which he positively celebrates black African physical and cultural beauties. He is the founder of Brazilian black literature and enriches the language with African *crioulo* elements. He is also pioneer in anti-slavery poetry.

Gama launched the public African-Brazilian aesthetic against the prevailing white ideology:

Oh Jetblack Muse of Guinea,
Statue of black granite,
Before whom Lion bows inanimate,
Stripped of his fierce wildness.
Lend me the urucungo gourd,
Teach me to brandish your marimba,
Inspire me in the science of candimba,

Guide me along the paths of high greatness.

I want to subdue the ancient bards' glory,
From the times of heroic warriors;
The Homers, Camões, the golden-tongued poeteers
Extolling the Barons of my Fatherland!...
I want the world to see me face to face,
The resounding Kinky-haired Orpheus,
Who, rejecting the Lyre, for being piteous,
For descanting from the august Marimba revered...²⁵

Gama founded a counter identity politics. He mocks the pseudo-scientific racists, whether slave-owners or abolitionists, in the poem 'No Album', where he satirically relates advice he had received:

Don't daub in a book,
So fine and so admirable;
Don't be a saphead,
Foolish and miserable.

Science and letters
Are not for you, my dear Black boy from the Costa,
Aren't people here.

And, revolting against the pressure of racist censorship, he explodes:

If the much that I feel
I cannot say,
Of the little that I know
I don't want to write.²⁶

Gama's book contains a few of the 'conventional' *cantos de banzo* (sad slave songs). The poem *Coleirinho* ('Collared Bird Song') has exquisite pathos: a ballad-like sighting of a lone, shackled slave man struggling with the pain, yet desire, of remembering his loving wife and beautiful baby whom he will never see again. Gama's contemplation of the fate of a poor slave in the poem *No Cemitério de S[ão] Bento* is another masterpiece in the genre.²⁷

Two of Gama's poems particularly confront slavocratic values: *Minha Mãe* and *Meus Amores*. He emphasizes the black woman's dignity and sensual and spiritual beauty:

She was very elegant and beautiful,
The most beautiful little Negress,
A queen from Lybia's fierceness,
And in Brazil a poor slave!

My loves are so beautiful, the colour of night
Adorned with stars glittering;
A lovely *crioula*, or black Thetis,
She has for eyes two asteroid sparkling...
I have yearned for centuries to love her.²⁸

Also shocking was the poem *A Cativa* ('The Slave Girl'), in which Gama praises the beauty of a *mulata* who must disappoint his desires because she is property of her master.

How beautiful she was, my God!
Not of snow was her colour,
However on her *moreno* [brown-skinned] face
There shone the rays of love ...
Between the cloud of eyebrows
She had two brilliant stars.
Her crisp locks of hair, so black,
Fallen upon her bosom ...
Pure soul, innocent flower ...
Don't go away, I beg her ...
Sighingly she murmurs,
Oh, dear sir, I am a slave!²⁹

In two other poems, he daringly brings up the subject of the fear of the black man's attentions to the white master's woman. *Laura* and *Junto à Estátua* ('Near a Statue'), in which he exposes the white Luso-Brazilian aesthetic as ossified and lifeless, unattainable and undesirable.

Gama's verse is insolent, sarcastic, irreverent, petulant, vindictive and inflammatory. This earned him the fierce hatred of the *fazendeiros* (planters) and high society, and popularity among broad sections of society. In his most famous poem, *Quern Sou Eu?* ('Who am I?'), popularly known as *Bodarrada* ('The Goatherd'), he demonstrates his full satirical powers. Always behind it all an unconditional abolitionist and radical antimonarchist, he attacks racist society. His combative satire attacks the caste and class social order through the parodie, burlesque, grotesque, travesty, caricature and farce of the colour code of the Brazilian racialocracy. He targeted what was the origin of the succeeding bourgeois capitalist *branqueamento* (whitening) and its attendant myth of *democracia racial* (racial democracy) along with the *favor-jeito* (favour-manner) clientele system, suppressing the black African.

Who Am I?

I love the poor, avoid the rich ...
From the nobles I'm always far ...

The friends I have are very few,
But good ones, who are old ones,
I always flee from hypocrisy,
Foolishness 'n' aristocracy ...
They call me the 'Tongue-Flier',
Goat, Negro, and 'Good-Friar' ...
If I'm Negro, or I'm a goat
It's not important, not an oat.
Goats there are in every caste,
For the species is very vast ...
There are grey ones, some are mottled,
Bays, white-faced, and some are dappled,
There are black goats, there are white goats...
Here in this land so good and sweet,
Everyone butts, everyone bleats ...
There are poor folk, there are rich folk,
And all of them are my kinfolk ...
In our songs and *lundu* love dance
We sing the herd's marriage romance:
For if we have little tailpieces,
So what, is that so capricious?
Let gladness be, let peace there be,
Rejoice and frolic the great goaterly;
Let come the capers' cessation,
For all is caprihoration!³⁰

Gama helped pioneer Brazilian radical political journalism. While much of his writings include sharp anti-monarchical editorials and an important legal defence of slaves against the slavocratic courts, he also chronicles the atrocities committed outside the law. In an important brief, he states that 'the slave who kills his master, whatever the circumstances may be, always kills in legitimate [self-]defence'.³¹

In powerful abolitionist style, he graphically describes in an essay a brutal mob murder, in a small town jail in 1880, of four slaves who had killed their master. He celebrates their 'martyrdom', and concludes:

[Four slaves who] raised themselves up, like reason, and killed their master, as Lusbel [Lucifer] would kill God, they were thrown into prison; and there ... three hundred citizens assembled, came to an agreement, marched directly to the jail: and there (oh! The whole world must applaud) with knife, club, hoe, axe, valiantly kill four men; even less, four Negroes; or even less, four slaves, manacled in a jail....

These four Negroes, pecked to pieces by the people, or by an alluvion of vultures were not four men, they were four ideas, four lights, four stars; in a sidereal convulsion they disposed of themselves, pulverized themselves, produced a nebula.

In the coming ages, the wise astronomers ... of the future will notice them among the planets: the suns produce worlds.³²

In 1870, Gama wrote a fatherly letter to his son.

Avoid friendship and relations with bigwigs; they are like the ocean that approaches the shore to eat away the rocks.

Be a republican, as Christ the Man was. Become an artist; believe, however, that study is the best training, and the book the best friend....

Fight with ardour against the throne, poverty and ignorance. Work for yourself and with unbreakable force so that this nation in which we were born, without king and without slave, may call itself the United States of Brazil.

Be Christian and a philosopher; believe only in the authority of reason, and never ever ally yourself to any religious sect. God only reveals himself in human reason, he does not exist in a single church in the world.

Remember that I wrote you these lines in a supreme moment, under the threat of being assassinated. Have compassion for your enemies, as I take pity on the fate of mine.³³

In these words, Gama sums up his and many others' progressive struggle for a place in humanity – an equal place yet true to his African-Brazilian existence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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 29. *Ibid.*, pp.191–2.
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Notes on Contributors

Henrice Altink is a lecturer in American history at the University of Glamorgan. Among her publications are articles on representations of Jamaican slave women, 1780–1838. She is currently working on the construction of black womenhood in Jamaica, 1865–1938.

Celeste-Marie Bernier has just completed her PhD dissertation, entitled “‘Dusky Powder Magazines’: The Creole Revolt (1841) in Nineteenth Century American Literature’, and supervised by Professors Judie Newman and Richard King, School of American and Canadian Studies, University of Nottingham. In addition to an exhibition review on the Liverpool and Bristol slavery exhibits which recently appeared in the *Journal of American History*, she has also published various reviews and an article on Frederick Douglass in *Slavery and Abolition* 22/2.

Jane Gardner is Emeritus Professor of Ancient History at the University of Reading and currently Special Professor in Classics at the University of Nottingham. Her published work covers many aspects of Roman literature and history. She is best known for her books on Roman social and legal history, *Women in Ancient Law and Society* (London: Routledge, 1986), *Being a Roman Citizen* (London: Routledge, 1993) and *Family and Familia in Roman Law and Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

Michele George is a Roman archaeologist who has published on the archaeological evidence for Roman slavery. She teaches in the Department of Classics at McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada.

Robert Krueger an Ibero-Latin Americanist, with Lusophone and Brazilianist speciality, is the founder of the International Group for the Recovery and Dissemination of the Slave Texts of Latin America. An Associate Professor of Portuguese and Spanish, Transatlantic and Inter-American Humanities, he has taught at the universities of Minnesota, Maryland, UCLA and Northern Iowa.

Silvia Hunold Lara, professor of History at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), Brazil, has published *Campos da Violência* (1988), edited *Ordenações Filipinas, livro V* (1999), and organized a collection of African slave laws in Portuguese America, in J. Andrés-Gallego (ed.), *Nuevas Aportaciones a la Historia Jurídica de Iberoamérica* (2000).

Niall McKeown is in the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Birmingham, UK. He is currently working on the history and

historiography of Greek and Roman slavery and on ancient medicine. He received his BA in History at the University of Manchester; his PhD, from the Faculty of Classics, Cambridge University, was entitled 'The slave mode of production: a very peculiar institution. An examination of some Marxist interpretations of ancient Greek slavery'.

David Pelteret is a Senior Research Fellow in the Department of History, King's College London, where he is a member of the Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England Project. His publications include *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England* (1995).

Robert W. Slenes teaches History at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), Brazil. His interest in travel literature and iconography stems from his research on nineteenth-century Brazilian slavery. His publications include a book on the slave family, *Na Senzala, uma Flor* (1999).

Ehud R. Toledano teaches Ottoman and Middle Eastern History at Tel-Aviv University, Israel. He is the author of five books, including: *The Ottoman Slave Trade and its Suppression, 1840–1890* (Princeton University Press, 1982), *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), and *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (University of Washington Press, 1998).

Thomas Wiedemann (1951–2001) was Professor of Latin at the University of Nottingham, founder of ICHOS (International Centre for the History of Slavery) and a member of the Mainz Akademie project on the history of slavery. He published extensively on slavery in the ancient world, especially the widely used *Greek and Roman Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1981) and *Slavery* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, for the Classical Association, 1987). His numerous publications on Roman social history include *Adults and Children in the Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1989), *Emperors and Gladiators* (London: Routledge, 1992) and, with Jane Gardner, *The Roman Household: A Source-Book* (London: Routledge, 1991).

Ingomar Weiler, Professor of Ancient History since 1974 at the Universities of Innsbruck and Graz, Austria, retired in March 2002. He is the author of *Der Agon im Mythos* (Darmstadt: 1974), and *Sport bei den Völkern der Alten Welt*, 2nd edn. (Darmstadt: 1988), editor of *Quellendokumentation zur Gymnastik und Agonistik im Altertum*, 7 vols. (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: 1991–2002), and *Soziale Randgruppen und Aubenseiter im Altertum* (Graz: 1998), and coeditor of *Nikephoros. Zeitschrift für Sport und Kultur im Altertum*. His key themes are concerned with the social history of antiquity, history of scholarship, and sport history.

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